

# JUNIOR-SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL CLEARING HOUSE

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## EDITORIAL

Two problems arose in the early preparation of a plan for selecting the contents of this issue: (1) What is "English expression" to mean, and (2) is the subject to be restricted to the classroom?

It was agreed that in soliciting articles for this issue of the JUNIOR-SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL CLEARING HOUSE, the term "English expression" be used as an inclusive term for all the arts of talking, reading, and writing. Self-expression is an activity *to be used* before it is *learned* and *learned* as it is *used*, or as some writer has said "life is playing a violin solo in public and learning the instrument as one goes along." It was also agreed that the discussion should not be restricted to institutions of learning only, but also applied to social and industrial fields.

Contributions were sought on English expression as it functions in social and industrial life, but lack of time prevented the committee from making the necessary contacts for securing contributions from these new fields. It is the impression of the committee that some contributions by competent persons on the meaning and force of English expression outside of institutions of learning would prove helpful to teachers of English.

An effort has been made to select contributions which will deal with the different phases of English expression as above in-

terpreted. No specific suggestions were given to any one when asked to contribute. The committee was desirous of obtaining the best contributions and in order to do this felt that no contributor should be restricted by any assignment. By this plan we think each article represents the best thought in the specific field of each contributor.

Attempts to systematize English in the schools have probably led to the present emphasis placed upon creative expression with the assumption that creative expression is necessarily hostile to technique. Several articles in this issue point out weaknesses on the part of pupils, not only in secondary schools but in colleges, in the use of an intelligent technique in English expression. In so doing, contributors do not advocate a procedure by which self-expression is sacrificed for a technique, but suggest means by which technique may not only function in creative work but illuminate all English expression.

The readers of this issue will be interested to find that an old classic does not necessarily have to be subjected to a dour thoroughness and an inscrutable abstraction, but may be kept in touch at every point with real life.

Responses from teachers of English in all sections of our country, supplemented by certain articles in this issue, seem to in-

dicating a radical change in the teaching of poetry—a change from the analytic to the synthetic method. Instead of an intensive study of the mechanism of poetry, they feel there are some other things to do with it: Children may compose a poem, read it, read special parts of it, reread it, memorize it, read it from memory, put it into a collection they like best, print it in the school paper, etc. Certain articles show clearly that poetry is to be appreciated and no longer to be studied and analyzed.

The subject covers such a wide field that no attempt was made to secure discussions of all phases of the subject in a single issue of the magazine.

L. W. R.

#### LANGUAGE AND LIFE

In the school's efforts to promote language skills, the curriculum is too often confused either with more or less scientifically derived *objectives* or with a *syllabus* or *outline*. In some cases, lists of words which pupils are to learn to spell, grammar which they are to master, common errors of usage or pronunciation which they are to avoid or overcome, and such like immediate technical objectives are set forth and called a "curriculum in language." In other cases, a syllabus of motivated exercises is drawn up and labeled a "language course of study."

It is not questioned by the writer that both objectives and suggested exercises belong in the course of study. The objection to current practice that he would raise is one of fundamental concept. Both the syllabus and the objectives imply that language arts are a subject taught by a teacher in class periods. Nothing could be farther from the truth, for the language arts are the organizing and transportation systems wherewith the civilized world conducts its work and its play.

Much of present education fails, as Dewey pointed out a third of a century

ago, because: "It conceives the school as a place where certain information is to be given, where certain lessons are to be learned, or where certain habits are to be formed. The value of these is conceived as lying largely in the remote future; the child does these things for the sake of something else he is to do; they are mere preparations. As a result they do not become a part of the life experience of the child and so are not truly educative.

"I believe that the teacher's place and work in the school is to be interpreted from this same basis. *The teacher is not in the school to impose certain ideas or to form certain habits in the child, but is there as a member of the community to select the influences which shall affect the child and to assist him in properly responding to these influences.*"<sup>1</sup>

It is just because language is the medium of family and neighborhood and club and vocational life, of politics and economics and culture, and of hate and prejudice and propaganda and love and tolerance and skepticism, that the school which reflects the world finds language to be its own major concern. In the life of the school adequate uses of language arts are essential to assemblies, debates, parliamentary procedures, dramatics, journalism, recitations, conversations, club meetings, home-room conferences, interviews, criticism, encouragement, reports, and inquiries. They are necessary for making plans and executing them, for persuading others of their validity or for dissuading those committed to another plan.

There is, to be sure, much to life, both within the school and outside of it, which uses other media than oral and written language. There are postures, gestures, and facial expressions; there are the primitive contacts of play and fighting; there are melody, rhythm, color, and harmony; and

<sup>1</sup> John Dewey, *My Pedagogic Creed* (E. L. Kellogg Company, 1897), pp. 8-9.

there are technical skills and imitation, elementary number concepts and sensory responses, and love and anger. But the moment one reflects upon any such aspect of life, he finds himself thinking by means of verbal symbols.

The language arts belong then to all phases of school life. If particular teachers are given special responsibilities for their promotion and improvement, they must lay hold of school life. The teacher is a member of a community of youths and adults who are busy with life. There are dramatics and assemblies to try out for and prepare; newspapers and yearbooks to which we hope to contribute and help publish; there are new rules proposed by the student council which we resent or approve or think should be modified.

Language-arts classes are not by any means limited to such direct reinforcement of general school and community activities. Its own practices—competitions, readings, listening, criticisms, applications for positions, dramatizations, and discussions—may generally have no immediate objectives beyond the success of the class projects. Even in such cases, however, it is evident that the English-expression classes are reproducing the very situations which characterize the socialized individual's experiences in his school life, his home and neighborhood life, and, to a degree, his leisure-time life.

In the needs for clear thinking, for convincing expressions of beliefs and feelings, and for tactful and sagacious argument and pleadings are found the motives and standards which control the students' efforts to improve in the language arts. If their enunciation is not clear, their choice of phrases lacking in variety, their voices harsh, their sentences confused, and their spelling and handwriting inadequate, it will scarcely be necessary to impose corrective tasks upon them. If they are given reasonable encouragement and assured, by means

of graded exercises, of continued success for their earnest efforts, they will work whole-heartedly to master the skills and knowledges which will pay such huge dividends. For their improvements will bear fruit not only in their English class projects but equally in their history, science, and mathematics classwork, in their club and homeroom and assembly and student-council participations, and in their secondary-school, Scout, and employment activities.

English expression as a school problem needs re-orientation. In spite of the earnest efforts of intelligent teachers, clear statements by leaders in the field, and a multitude of meticulous and extended investigations, results have been disappointing. In no other aspect of the secondary-school curriculum has the failure of youths to show improvement or even to remember what they have been supposed to master been so pitilessly exposed.

Recent investigations in achievements in written English—cited by Leonard in his editorial in the June 1929 *Journal of Educational Research*—indicate that pupils' out-of-school English usages are not affected by high-school instruction and that the best seventh-grade pupils use quite as good English as the best twelfth-grade pupils!

In no other aspect of the secondary-school curriculum are the failures of the pupil to transfer learnings from class to class so glaringly evident. And in no other aspect of the secondary-school curriculum are the opportunities for coöperation so significant and promising.

Not by the demand that teachers of other subjects should stultify their own peculiar subject activities to insist on meticulous language accuracies can the control of this great instrument of intelligent intercourse be improved. Rather must we endeavor to accomplish functional control by making of the English-expression periods vital laboratory experiences in which the situations



typical of social life—in-school and out-of-school life—are reproduced, and in which youths are helped to become as adequate as their native talents make possible.

#### ORAL USAGES AND THE SOCIALIZATION OF MOTIVE

There are reasons enough why the schools should encourage and assist young people to pronounce English words acceptably and to develop pleasing speaking voices. So long as the majority of our clergy and statesmen and radio announcers and public speakers and actors and business executives and club presidents and cultured conversationalists are drawn from social groups among whom accepted pronunciations and vocal control are habitual, so long will the fashion and the standards of accurate pronunciation and pleasing tone and pitch be stabilized and potent.

As such, they become the most obvious, though unostentatious, badges of culture and breeding. Whoever admires the holder of an honored position may be stimulated to emulate him. The urge for membership among the socially élite may be counted upon to motivate the adolescent's efforts to improve his speech.

Reënforcing the desire for social acceptance is the vocational-economic motive. Large school systems are imposing oral examinations on all candidates for teaching certificates, on the basis of which many are rejected because of defects of speech. In smaller school systems, the same outcomes follow many interviews between candidates and employing officers. And, to a less extent, perhaps, the same condition exists in commercial and professional offices, and even in clubs which pretend to restrict their membership and employment to those of accepted behaviors.

It is, therefore, absurd to seek out utterly imaginary and unsubstantial motives. "No person can be patriotic who misuses his mother tongue" an English professor

told a high-school audience recently. "I would not trust a man [in high political position] who pronounced *reidiou* as *rag-diou*," an English teacher informed the writer in 1928. If Edward Albert Christian George Andrew Patrick David refers to his brother as the *Du:k* of York and calls the famous theater district "*Baikli* Square," as Dr. Vizetelly says that he does, then what will the "King's English" be on the demise of George V?

Not only Alfred E. Smith but many others of the outstanding and thoroughly trusted men of our generation are guilty of barbaric pronunciations. Even Abraham Lincoln, master of English, used the corruption "haint" on the very eve of his departure for Washington for his inauguration, according to Carl Sandburg. But such men have arrived at their eminent positions through other qualities. Because of these attributes, their colloquialisms are overlooked by most people.

Only the cheapest demagogue would stultify himself by adopting nonstandard pronunciations or harsh throaty voice in order to tickle the crowd. All sincere speakers would strive, next to planning the content of their talk, to pronounce correctly the words used and to use their voices as acceptably as possible.

It comes to this. Social demand for and acceptance of standard pronunciation and pleasing voice are potent. The adolescent is led to be alert for accuracy and voice control by being introduced into situations where careful pronunciation and pleasing voice bring social approval from those whose approvals count, and where continued careless pronunciations and crude harsh or nasal voices assure the scorn of those whose scorn counts.

Socializing the educative process in connection with English usage, even more than in other aspects of the curriculum, is the essential step. Teachers' marks, promotions,

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medals, or other symbols of extrinsic motivation are futile. They are unreal and superimposed. They are vicious in that they take the attention of pupils and teach-

ers away from the real motives which are so potent in a world wherein social-intercourse constitutes most of satisfying life.

P. W. L. C.

## MEANS OF STIMULATING VERSE MAKING IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

NELLIE B. SERGENT

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Miss Sergent, as faculty adviser of the Poets' Club, has to her credit those two notable Anthologies of Student Verse published by the Evander Childs High School, New York City, in 1927 and 1928.*

H. M.

I should like to begin this article by commenting on some current misconceptions, as they seem to me to be, in regard to what is called "creative teaching" in schools. We hear the expression, "creating an atmosphere" for such work, as though some special environment were necessary for the growth of poets, something quite different from the dust-and-chalk-laden air of the ordinary schoolroom. Other misleading words are "gifted children" and "gifted teachers." These esoteric expressions tend to deter average teachers of average children in average schools from attempting creative work. The "atmosphere" is not something got up beforehand; it begins when the work begins and grows as the work grows. I know from experience that neither the teachers nor the pupils need to be especially "called of God." They learn to teach and to write by teaching and by writing and become "gifted" by practice. The reality is described by Dr. Joseph Taylor in an article in a recent issue of the *Herald Tribune*. He says "The children of the public schools become creative as soon as we 'take the lid off' and give them freedom of expression under proper stimulus and guidance."

Even the title of this article is too "high sounding." There are no inevitable "means of stimulating" this kind of work except to begin and learn to do it by doing it. Every teacher will have her own method, which will change with experience and dif-

fer with different groups of pupils; and perhaps her finest poet will spring full-armed from the head of Zeus, quite unstimulated by her. In this article I shall try to describe some methods of my own that have been more or less successful in producing interesting results; that is, if the results were produced by the methods. One prefers, in time, to call one's self a collector of poets rather than a teacher of creative writing.

But the fact remains—and this is the teacher's opportunity—that there are, in every school, boys and girls with the possibilities of artistic experience who would never realize those possibilities if some teacher did not arouse their interest in self-expression and then, by encouragement and a little necessary instruction, help them to develop what is in them. The practice of having original poems written in connection with the study of poetry was followed by some teachers long before the creative teaching movement was heard of. These poems helped to furnish pabulum for the school magazine, but nobody became excited over them. They really weren't very good because not enough time was given to the writing of poems to develop latent abilities. The emphasis of the new educational doctrine on the importance of creative activity has given to educators the assurance that such work is worth the necessary expenditure of time and effort. This assurance, interest in the work, and

the initiative to begin are the only essential "gifts" of the teacher. The requisite knowledge may be acquired by the way, from reading and from experience.

One practical starting point is the English class when a volume of poetry is being studied. It is important that the pupils be set straight as to what poetry is. A brief story of its origin may be illuminating; that poetry was made before reading and writing were known—vivid, thrilling stories of real happenings recited by the poet for the entertainment of other people, as we go to the theater or the movies for our entertainment. Poetry may not be in the form of poems at all; it is really experience, very exciting experience that may be expressed in music or pictures or poems or never expressed. Everybody has such experiences—the things that make us say, "Oh, isn't that beautiful!" or "Oh, isn't that interesting!" The essential thing, then, is excitement or what we call emotion. We may express this excitement in prose or in verse, and it will be poetry in either case. If other people catch our excitement and feel the emotion we have felt, it is a good poem. The reason that most poetry is written in verse is that the rhymes and rhythms of verse give the poetic feeling a beauty of form and sound that makes it more attractive than prose or free verse; "more memorable," as a modern critic expresses it. Poetry is as natural as singing, and most people can write poems if they put their minds to it. We begin by having a good time in our minds with the everyday things we see and hear and touch and taste and smell. Rupert Brooke's *The Great Lover* illustrates how a poet feels towards the things around him. Perhaps the class will make lists of the things they love. These lists may afterwards grow into poems.

In connection with the study of any book of verse, I teach a few facts of prosody. The pupils learn to recognize the common

figures of speech and to appreciate their poetic value. They will suggest similes and metaphors of everyday speech or slang that they use and like. They may have an exercise in making little poems consisting of one beautiful metaphor, or in writing Homeric similes, if they happen at the time to be studying Homer or Arnold. They learn the names of the metrical feet and lines and have a good deal of practice in scanning lines to determine the meter. A collection of lines from poems familiar to them may be used for this purpose. This develops a kind of "ear" for meter which will prove useful later. They notice the metrical patterns of the poems they study and also how sound effects are produced. Having learned to name and appreciate all these qualities of poetry, the artistically sensitive ones will, consciously and unconsciously, transfer the knowledge to their own writing of poems. Moreover, they have a language to talk with, in criticizing their own and each other's work.

Some time beforehand the teacher will announce that soon the class may write poems. Or, better than that, some pupil may ask for the privilege. If all the class can be made to *want* to try, the "atmosphere for creative writing" is perfect. The assignment—now *you* write a poem!—should be made a week in advance. The next day poems will begin to come in. A part of each period may be devoted to reading and criticizing these and some better ones written by other high-school students. I find that pupils enjoy amateur verse, when it is good, more than the standard work of their textbooks; and certainly they are more stimulated by it in their own writing. A growing collection of poems written by high-school students should be a part of the teacher's equipment.

I have never assigned subjects for poems, but I try to teach them how to get their own subjects. Each one must take something from his own experience that seems

to him especially interesting or significant or amusing. Beauty is not prettiness to the poet. An Irish grandmother or a Jewish grandfather may be made very beautiful and touching, as two poems of my collection will prove. And one of the most delightful poems I have is about a Monday washing. High-school students see as clearly and feel as deeply as do grown-ups; and they have as keen a delight in words, the medium of poetry—as witness Sentimental Tommy. So why shouldn't they write poems? "Trust your own emotions," said Emerson. Sir Philip Sidney put the same thought into different words:

Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite;  
"Fool," said my Muse to me, "look in thy heart and write."

Letting them find their own subjects and treat them in their own way makes for greater individuality in their writing.

And what do high-school youngsters find in their heads and hearts? Very interesting matters, indeed. Here is a little poem sent to me from Cranford, New Jersey, the first attempt of a first-year boy. It is a good illustration of the effect of personification.

#### A GOLF BALL

You dirty little dimpled ball,  
You know the traps, you know them all.  
Why don't you stay upon the green,  
Where you and I could both keep clean?

—WILLIAM ANGUS

A second-year girl wrote this very rhythmic bit of free verse as her first poem.

#### REMEMBRANCE

I try to forget you  
But I cannot;  
You are forever woven  
Into my dreams—  
A fragrant mystery,  
An everlasting delight,  
A poignant reminder  
Of things that used to be.

—ADELE LEHNSTUL

This third-year girl was in love with the wind. She wrote many poems after this one, but never one in which the wind did not figure.

#### PLAYMATES

I love the wind.  
My hair flies back,  
My thoughts away.  
I blow along,  
Lost in delight  
Of new-found play.

—RUTH DOKSON

Some of our best poems have been the maiden attempts of seniors. The first one below is by a boy whose dreams were all of travel, as his prose writing also revealed. The second is by a naturalist with a good sense of humor.

#### LONGING

How hard it is to watch the ships  
Go out to sea,  
While far, adventurous ocean trips  
Are kept from me.

Some day these barriers will lose  
Their power to stay;  
On distant travels I shall choose  
To sail away.

—ALFRED FAUST

#### HIS FIRST AFFAIR

His rifle rusts behind the door,  
And rod and reel are used no more;  
Pets lie unnoticed at his feet,  
For he is lost in day-dreams sweet.  
It seems that twilight, starlit night,  
Sunset, a rainbow, and moonlight,  
And every other scene or place,  
Are merely backgrounds for her face.  
In the deep blue of cloudless skies  
He always sees her lovely eyes,  
And mellow wind-tossed leaves compare  
With the soft golden of her hair.  
He thinks her power to inspire  
Has raised him from the lowly mire,  
And that the stars up in the sky  
Are close at hand when she's near-by.

—WILLIAM GREENE

These are some of the high spots of several years' experience. The results of the first assignment may be thirty or forty of the world's worst poems. The teacher will need faith, hope, charity, and a sense of humor, to survive them. And yet this is valuable material for the study of poetry. Now the facts of poetic technique previously learned will come to life and become matters of real interest and importance.



Imperfect rhymes, faulty rhythms, incongruous images, unpoetic diction, *clichés*, sentimentality, senselessness—all may be illustrated from this sheaf of bad poems. Nothing, I think, can contribute more to an intelligent appreciation of poetry than the attempt to write it, with this negative lesson in what ought not to be done. Most of us of the older generation know this to be true from our college experience in hammering out a sonnet; then and only then did we appreciate Shakespeare and Keats.

The second time around—and there should always be a second time—the results will be much better. Several poems good enough to print in the school paper—and some youngsters have been started on poetic careers. Now the class will proceed to other phases of the term's work, but with the understanding that poems will always be welcomed by the teacher. A few will keep on and will eventually qualify for the Poets' Club. Notebooks of old poems will sometimes be confided to the teacher, which will indicate a genuine interest that may be worth encouraging.

The value of all this may reasonably be questioned. A good deal of time has been spent in proportion to the tangible results obtained. I myself am reassured by the knowledge that most of our finest school poets trace their interest in writing to some such assignment as the one here described. Perhaps they achieved nothing worth while at the time, but seed was sown that later bore fruit. And the poor poems are not a total loss. A youngster will get a "big kick" out of writing a bad poem, and will have a more friendly feeling towards poetry ever after. I believe, however, that the experiment should not be attempted in "C" classes of the lower terms.

The best possible means of stimulating verse writing is the Poets' Club. Here are collected all the pupils who have displayed real interest and some ability. They meet once a week, read their poems aloud to the

group, and criticize each other's work. The teacher should leave much of the criticism to the pupils, for this practice will make them critical of their own writing. She may add what has been left unsaid when the other critics have finished. She will also guide them in their reading of other poetry and may have a small circulating library to hand around among the members. This should include Auslander's *Winged Horse*, Mearns's *Creative Youth*, Lamborn's *Rudiments of Criticism*, anthologies of standard verse, anthologies of high-school verse, and—most important—volumes of the older poets. Writing, reading and criticism help each other, and all make for greater appreciation.

But the teacher's chief contribution, and the one for which she is indispensable, is in the developing of high standards. One of the first things for amateur poets to learn is that rhymes and rhythms, however perfect, do not make a poem. Unless it has real emotion and some originality of thought or expression, what he has written will be rhymed description or rhymed moralizing or rhymed sentimentality, but not poetry. A good deal of the verse in school magazines and anthologies is uninteresting because of failure to understand this distinction.

Another fundamental principle, especially applicable to nature poetry, is expressed by Wordsworth's famous dictum, "Write with your eye on the object." You must be concrete and accurate if your poem is to be vivid and convincing. The scientific inaccuracy of *Moonrise* spoiled it for the naturalists of the Poets' Club, in spite of the personifications and lovely sound effects.

#### MOONRISE

Night steals on silver-slippered feet  
Across the quiet bay;  
She leaves a slender, shining path  
To show the moon the way—  
The wee new moon whose baby beams  
Might wander off to play.

—LYDIA BRUCKMAN

But this *Song Sparrow* rings true for every one who knows that bird:

#### THE SONG SPARROW

You linger not for fairy spring  
To tint bleak fields in your domain,  
But from the tallest shrub you sing  
Through dreary days of drizzling rain.

—WILLIAM GREENE

And here is a convincing cat:

#### SENSUOUSNESS

Does that great white cat stretched under the trees  
With his paws tucked under in well-fed ease,  
Note the bursting buds and the song begun—  
Or only the warmth of the mid-day sun?

—JEAN K. JOHNSTON

When the poem "has something in it" but still isn't very good, it may often be greatly improved by changes suggested by the teacher or by the other members of the Club. The young writer is at first inclined to feel that his poem "came to him just that way" and therefore is sacrosanct. He may be cured, very gently, of this fetishism by being told how much the great poets worked over and revised their writings—and by seeing his own poem improve before his very eyes. Technical faults may be pointed out, which the poet will himself correct. More often the poem may be greatly improved by cutting out unnecessary words, lines, or whole stanzas. The importance of conciseness and economy of expression cannot be overemphasized. Moreover, the best line or the best stanza must come at the end. The second stanza of *Poetry* was scrapped because it was an anticlimax. It was superfluous, anyway, as the whole poem was in the lovely first stanza.

#### POETRY

Poetry, O Poetry,  
Traitor that you are,  
You take away the heart of me  
And hang it on a star.

Poetry, O Poetry,  
Do you think it fair?  
But I shan't be so angry  
If you'll handle it with care.

The beauty of this little poem lies in the depth of feeling which it expresses and also in the sound effects—the long o's, long a's, and the t's carried from line to line through the four lines. Such effects, frequent in these youngsters' writings, come from a kind of instinct, intuition, inspiration, or whatever it is, that transcends all teaching.

*The Memory of It* originally had two other stanzas, not very poetic and full of I's and you's. The whole poem is in the first stanza, with none of the too personal effect of the later ones.

#### THE MEMORY OF IT

There was a moon that night—  
A golden scimitar  
Slashing the blue  
Of somber skies—  
There were stars above  
Like diamond-dust,  
Like the twinkling of  
A billion eyes—  
There were breezes, soft  
As an elfin's kiss,  
As the touch of a bit  
Of floating down;  
There were fairy lights,  
And glow-worm lights,  
And the far-off lights  
Of the distant town. . .

—LEO ISAACS

This poem has the quality of suggestiveness that is essential to love poems. The poet must be careful not to detail his own "symptoms" and nothing more; he must express his emotion in such a way that the reader will think of his own experiences rather than those of the writer. It is usually well to avoid personal pronouns, though a poem may rise to a universal level in spite of them, as this one does:

#### GIFT

You gave a gift to me,  
Carnations red as red can be;  
My heart has said a word  
That would make my lips absurd.

—S. M. LACKOFF

All "principles of criticism" are suggestive rather than arbitrary. The ultimate

test of a poem is—does it do something to the reader? Does it make him burst into a laugh, or shed a surreptitious tear, or recall some old experience, or sigh and murmur, "How true!" or smile and ejaculate, "Isn't it cute!" Does it give him a new insight into the beauty of the world or the meaning of life? "Poetry makes this much loved earth more lovely," said Sir Philip Sidney—and we sometimes add, "and this much loved city more interesting." This meets Sidney's requirement:

#### DUSK ON THE ROOF

I journeyed to the roof one twilight deep,  
To watch the weary world go hustling by;  
There, through the noise, a silence seemed to creep.  
Its calm and balm gold-threaded with a sigh.

A few faint lights shone dimly through the haze,  
I saw the last swift swallow southward fly—  
The trees and houses faded to a maze,  
And trails and veils of smoke rose up the sky.

I stood and gazed until the evening star  
Came stepping timidly into the night,  
And thought I heard its music from afar,  
That sings and rings through firmaments of light.

—MARY A. BARRY

The alliterations, the succession of s's with their "hushing" effect, and the internal rhyme in the last line of each stanza give this poem a unique beauty. When I asked the author how she happened to write it, she replied, "I really went up to bring the clothes down from the roof, and Mother thought I was gone an awfully long time." This poetizing of actual experiences, with the technical skill acquired by practice, makes their writing real poetry.

The next pupil writes realistic poems of the city, usually in free verse. The economy with which they are done and the vividness and variety of the sense impressions make the peculiar beauty of these poems.

#### CITY MORN

I dash out into the clear roseate dawn  
And breathlessly board a trolley.

The sun comes up and slants gold beams  
Into wide bright eyes.

Chatter carries a high, infectious note  
A whistle trills.

There is a new pulse in the city  
At dawn.

—ISABEL MALAKOFF

#### HOME-COMINGS

Dad

A jingle of keys.  
The flash of his cheery smile.  
A quick, crispy kiss.

Mother

The trill of a bell.  
Tantalizing warm scents  
Amid black velvet.

Tomboy

A thump on the door.  
Impatient tapping of feet  
And a gruff "hullo."

—ISABEL MALAKOFF

An interesting phase of the work that gives it breadth and variety is the attempting of special poetic forms. The triolet is particularly popular with my poets. Here is one that sparkles with l's.

#### RIVULET

A sparkling little rivulet  
Goes dancing on its way,  
A laughing human child, and yet  
A sparkling little rivulet  
That charms away our futile fret  
And makes our hearts beat light  
and gay;  
A sparkling little rivulet  
Goes dancing on its way.

—MARY TANENHAUS

The other French forms are difficult and are rarely tried, but we have had one lovely villanelle:

#### APRIL VILLANELLE

(For Audrey on Her Birthday)

When the world is turning green,  
And the robin's on the way,  
Joy it is to be sixteen.

Gardens have a tender sheen,  
With the tulip bells a-sway,  
When the world is turning green.

Willows toward the water lean,  
Emerald mist on branches gray—  
Joy it is to be sixteen.



Loveliness has not been seen  
That can make a heart so gay  
When the world is turning green.

Life is like a pageant screen,  
Pan a-piping all the day—  
Joy it is to be sixteen.

Stores of blithesome memories glean  
To the tune of roundelay.  
When the world is turning green,  
Joy it is to be sixteen.

—MARY A. BARRY

Sonnets are difficult, too, and require concentration and perseverance. This one, written several terms ago, has suggested or inspired a number of others since its time:

#### SONNET

##### "To My 'Dark Lady'"

You are the essence of all lovely things:  
A verdant glade where little children play,  
The "Liebeslied," heard softly far away,  
A crooning cello's dreamy murmurings,  
The blue-gray pearliness December brings,  
The turquoise of an April break-of-day,  
A midnight dance along the Milky Way,  
And unborn violets of future Springs.

All loveliness is loveliest in you.  
But need I ponder on a measured rhyme?  
(My sonnet is such mere futility!)  
I could the while scan verses far more true—  
One hour with you, my Sonnet of all time,  
Whose gentleness alone is poetry.

—HELEN WALL

These are some suggestions that may help the teacher and the pupils to develop high standards of excellence. Nothing should be accepted as "good, for a high-school student," unless it is good in itself as a poem. The quality will be as fine as the standards demand. Nothing flat or poorly written should be included in the school publications. A magazine friendly to verse and a newspaper running a column every week will be great incentives to fine work. The desire to please their high-school public puts the young writers on their mettle to do their best. The "razzing" of their fellow students will teach them far more than the adverse criticism of the teacher can do, and they will remember it much longer.

Every year or every two years the best

of the poems may be collected and published in an anthology of school verse. This work should be done with the greatest care. The editing will require judgment, good taste, and fine discrimination, as only the really good poems should be included. The questions of format, cuts, and printing must be carefully considered, for the little book should be as beautiful as the possible financial expenditure will permit. Then there will be questions of advertising and of selling. Altogether, it will prove a very educating experience for all those concerned with it.

Coöperation of all the teachers in the English department helps greatly in spreading the interest in poetry. Some teachers use the newspaper and the magazine regularly in the classroom. Several teachers in my school have used our anthologies as supplementary reading in connection with the study of modern verse. Almost all of them have helped to make the sales of the publications successful. All of this interest on the part of teachers stimulates interest throughout the school and increases the number of poets. Five years ago, before the organization of the Poets' Club, we had two pupils in school who sometimes wrote poems; now we have fifty who have written verse good enough to print in the periodicals, and several hundred others who are beginning to try.

The effect of all this upon the pupil-poets will be apparent to readers conversant with modern educational philosophy. The first result is the joy in life and in school that it gives them. Who could creep "like snail unwillingly to school," "with heavy looks," when he has a poem (or a story or a drawing) to display to his teacher and his other friends? A recalcitrant youngster may get a totally new attitude towards school from writing one good poem. He wins the approval of the class and the teacher, the poem is printed in the school paper and is read and approved by other

pupils and teachers, and leads to more poems and more interesting experiences. He finds that his soul's craving for distinction is better satisfied by this course than by "going on the hook" or "trying to get the teacher's goat." And with this happiness comes something else, which Masfield suggests in the line, "The days that make us happy make us wise."

Creative work of this kind is a good illustration of what the philosophers call a "leading-on activity"—and the end does not come with graduation from high school. The young writer may never become a recognized poet—and again he may—but all this reading and writing will inevitably give him an aesthetic interest for life—which should be one of the inalienable rights of every human being.

And the pupils are not the only ones to profit by this adventure. Letters that I have received from other teachers who are doing this work reflect my own experience. "I have never enjoyed any other

English project so much as this," writes one teacher. "Isn't there joy in just giving these youngsters wings and then watching them soar?" writes another. It is creative work for the teacher, too, with as many "leading-on activities," "integrations of meanings," and "concomitant learnings" for her as for the younger students, for according to the new psychology there is no such thing as "maturity."

The writing of poetry here described is, of course, only one of many teaching projects that may embody the tenets of the new education, with similar benefits to pupils and teachers. Mrs. Snow Longley Housh closes her Foreword to the Los Angeles High School *Anthology of Student Verse*, 1927, with a sentence with which I should like to close this article: "There are a myriad ways to a beautiful life—poetry, music, art, science, love, religion, service—and each teacher is privileged to lead her young people a short distance in the path she knows best."

## A NOTE ON ORDINARY FOLKS

HUGHES MEARNS

EDITOR'S NOTE: *We asked Professor Mearns to tell us about the pupils of Lincoln School. Many maintain that his Creative Youth came from "a carefully selected group." Our readers will remember his article in the February CLEARING HOUSE on "The Demon of Inhibition."*

F. E. L.

For the remainder of my life, I suppose, I must prepare myself to hear the statement that the Lincoln School pupils were "a carefully selected group" and that, therefore, it is natural that they should have achieved the product represented in *Creative Youth*. Well, for the remainder of my life I shall go on denying the truth of that statement. The pupils of the Lincoln School were selected in the order in which they came into the office and applied for admission!

As we naturally drew from courageous parents, those willing to entrust their children to a new venture frankly experimental,

our early group was superior to the usual run, although not different from the clientele of hundreds of schools I could easily name; but, realizing that we should approach a more normal public-school picture, the management purposely introduced a large percentage of free-tuition pupils, often choosing those who had had difficulties in school life. About one third of our enrollment was soon on the free-tuition list. Our mean I. Q. was the same as many other schools in our section and was not different from hundreds of better located suburban schools throughout the country.

Far from being "selected," we exhibited a surprising and amusing social mixture with all sorts represented, from those who had lived abroad down (or up?) through the scale to those so stubbornly Manhattan as to be unable physically to address their instructor as other than "Mizdeh Moints"!

We have further proof that Lincoln School was simply a normal good school. The authorities had luckily saved every bit of writing work done by these pupils for the first three years of its existence. I have examined every word of this large mass: it does not exhibit a single sign of anything "creative"; it is the usual good, fair, and indifferent work that almost any slightly-better-than-average school could match. It was not until we had worked patiently to bring out of secret endeavor the clumsy native self-expression; not until we had proved to sensitive, suspicious pupils that we really did like their own funny scrawlings; not, in short, until we gave them confidence in their own powers did their new gifts begin to take on the unusual character which so many persons have later admired.

Like other schools we had our slow pupils, our inarticulate ones, the slovenly, the indifferent, and the seemingly dull. We had leaders, to be sure, but it was our approval that made them leaders. We could have frowned upon their weird and often bizarre efforts; we could have told them not to waste their time on such fooling and to spend their hours to better advantage in preparing textbook lessons. And in doing so we should have set up a different kind of leader.

It was solely our attitude towards creative expression that finally—it took nearly three years—put the literary artists in control. The eventual effect of their leadership was twofold: they stimulated their own kind and added to our glory; but their very superiority was often depressing to the slower ones, to those whose fears of inade-

quacy overwhelmed even the attempt to try. The tendency of the crowd is always to sit back and let the artist entertain.

My mistakes were made in placing too much of my approval upon the superior product. I let my excitement flow all over the place, stirring up everybody including the faculty; I glorified the succession of astonishing verses that began at about the third year of the experiment to pop forth almost on the hour every hour. Later I learned to lower my standards, to simulate excitement over inferior work, to encourage and even to print the less astonishing output of the others.

It was from Miss Caroline Zachry, who had charge of the English work in the junior high school, that I discovered the error of my ways. While I was having leaders and an inarticulate set of appreciative listeners, she was having everybody at work. She had the professional sense to glow over every sort of creative attempt. Her mimeographed magazine was alive with the most absurd things. She boldly approved doggerel verse that would almost set the ears on edge.

Her measure was different from mine at that time: I was watchful for the superior product; she looked solely for boiling, hour-after-hour-enduring interest. That her hopefuls laid and set and hatched and cackled, that was her concern; that some of the product was addled was not to her important; eventually she had a brave basket to take to market.<sup>1</sup>

She had many devices for drawing attention to superior work, but at no time did she draw too much attention to it. It is a nice art to keep children at a high pitch of interest in creative work and at the same time to suggest to them that they might do better. Her plan was to attract their attention to something of their own that was

<sup>1</sup> Caroline Zachry, *Illustrations of English Work in the Junior High School*, Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University.



very fine. One of her best tricks was to have one poem of the mimeographed magazine set up in the school printshop to make the cover for each issue. While the children often believed that it was their judgment that gave the place of honor to the poem selected, Miss Zachry delicately manoeuvred that judgment; and she always reserved the right in a pinch to make that choice arbitrarily herself.

From the abundant expressions of creative activity that are being permitted in junior high schools all over the country, in handmade papers, mimeographed magazines, and printed periodicals, I am convinced that the ordinary folks are having their chance. Almost every honest effort is allowed, and that is as it should be. The standard is lowered, of course; and that is also as it should be. We have juvenile jokes, the juvenile story of horror—how they love hair-raising adventure!—and an almost superabundance of doggerel verses. The point is that we are permitting these young people to use language for the purposes they themselves really esteem. They must express something or we cannot move them forward to a desire for superior effort.

The old education set up an adult standard at every stage of growth. We are learning that the only standard which is effective for self-education is the one that is whole-heartedly accepted by the young people themselves. Our final results, we are now assured, will be far ahead of anything the old education had to show. We simply start lower and take a longer time to reach the heights.

Self-expression itself, however, is not enough. There must be a movement forward and upward. Even the jokes should be better jokes. The wildly adventurous story should calm down and take on believable shape. The doggerel verse should be voluntarily discarded for more sincere self-revealings. And that is where we come in with our professional skill. We must know

what is appropriate for each stage of upward development; we must take it where we find it and never quarrel because it seems to us low; we must know how to entice an agreement with our judgment as to superior work.

One of the best ways to have good taste steal imperceptibly into the hearts of youth—and if it once lodges there it will drive out the cheap and the silly—is to have examples of the good work of other children near at hand for reading aloud or for private circulation. Hilda Conkling's two wonderful books *Poems by a Little Girl* and *Shoes of the Wind* have been powerful teachers to the facile doggerelists; although one must be prepared for outright repugnance from some who are not yet able to appreciate anything so fine as Hilda's muse. Barbara Follet's *The House Without Windows* has revealed the art of imaginative story writing to many a susceptible young girl; and for boys no teaching is equal to the transforming effect of David Putman's *David Goes to Greenland* and Deric Nusbaum's *Deric in Mesa Verde*. And if the school can gather, in permanent printed form, the best work of recent years, it will present an understandable standard towards which many an eager youngster will hopefully set his endeavor.

Ordinary folks, like mysterious and baffling illnesses to the physician, are a great challenge to our new professional attitudes towards teaching. Following good medical practice, we shall not quarrel with our patients nor punish them for being unresponsive to the usual treatment. How we used to knock them about! Well, that therapy is almost as absurd nowadays as cupping and leaching. Instead, we try again and again, with a patience that the old pedagogue never even believed in, and with an abiding faith in the possibilities of each strange and stubborn personality that comes into our charge which at times makes the

new education take on some of the aspects of an inspired religious movement in soul saving.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these—!" Religious? Why not? I am one who believes that it is all of that.

## OBJECTIVES IN ENGLISH

ETHEL BURNS BREED

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Ethel Burns Breed is a member of the Board of Education of Cornwall, New York. Mrs. Breed, who was formerly a teacher of English in the secondary schools, is an alert student of the educational problems with which her Board of Education is called upon to deal. At present she is traveling in Russia, spending part of her time studying the Russian school methods.*

P. W. L. C.

One of the fascinating things about education today is that none of us can be really sure about anything. We can hold a hypothesis with the utmost vigor today, and be ready to discard it tomorrow, in the light of some new evidence. Experiments multiply. We keep track of them in our professional magazines and books. We test out the results in our classes. We enlarge or modify the experiments, making our own contributions, and out of the mass of accumulating data certain tendencies appear strong. On the basis of these tendencies, and of the contributions of the other sciences, we make our theories.

This particular theory is taken from Dr. Philip Cox, head of the department of secondary education of New York University. He says, "a subject to have educative value for a pupil must present to him objectives that are dynamic, reasonable, and worth while."

By *dynamic* let us mean the power within the objective to inspire the pupil to the self-activity necessary to its achievement. If the efforts are to be considerable, the objective contains usually a strong emotional urge. I recall a fiery young Italian lad who had just entered school.

"I wanta da talka just lika you," he announced. "Den I tella alla da fellas Go Hell, and dey no calla me Wop." A tremendously dynamic objective, weak in its ethical import, but a mighty lever to im-

prove his use of English. And how that boy did improve! Not only in speech, but in developing out of truculence into an attitude of good will. Great is the interest that we can find in discovering what objectives are dynamic, and why. Every class and every individual will present variations. Part of the Art of teaching, as distinct from the Science of teaching, is in our sensitiveness to these shades of human values, and in the acumen of our reaction to them.

By *reasonable*, let us mean that the results either immediate or prospective that a pupil finds in his work justify to him the labor that he must expend upon it. Notice that the emphasis is upon justify to *him* and *his* labors, thus providing for the differentiation of individuals. For instance, the pupil who by his third year of high school has developed some linguistic sense and begun to grapple with problems of expression will find exhilarating the struggle with grammar and rhetoric. Unless the bad teaching of them in the earlier grades has forever prejudiced him, their use as means to a desired end will make them seem to him reasonable. To the nonverbal-minded pupil, on the other hand, they will have no educative value whatsoever, but be instead a detriment to his development. For his ideas will be expressed only secondarily in words; primarily in blue-print plans, or pictures, or music, or craftsman-

ship, or something else. He will never carry the use of speech far enough to make him seek grammar and rhetoric as tools to manipulate it. All his longing is to be sharpening another set of instruments, such as the abilities to wield paint brushes, or a welding torch, or a violin bow. Happily, language is not for all of us the chief means of expression, and any objective that assumes that it is will never appear reasonable to the person for whom it isn't. He may, however, find entirely reasonable all the effort required to visualize the imagery in Milton's minor poems if his fingers tingle to transfer the pictures from the printed page to glowing color.

By *worth while* let us mean that the objective is related in the pupil's mind to something he recognizes as a real need or interest. Thrown informally last spring with six widely different high-school groups, I asked each what they were most interested in talking about among themselves. The subjects most frequently mentioned were: ourselves, sex, religion. Here is a clue as to what would make worth while to most of our pupils the discussion in class of such books as *Mill on the Floss*, or *Essay on Burns*, wherein Maggie Tulliver and Robert Burns illustrate to many boys and girls some aspects of "ourselves;" as *Macbeth*, with its tremendous portrayal of the marriage relation, or *Romeo and Juliet*, with its poignant, revealing psychology of passionate young love; as *David Copperfield*, or *House of the Seven Gables*, with their clearly defined religious attitudes. English, more than any other school subject, can be made "worth while" because in the choice of reading our syllabus gives us there is no aspect of life to which it cannot be closely and intimately related.

It would be interesting to apply each of these definitions to each topic that we teach. Time forbids. The overlapping of dynamic, reasonable, and worth while is apparent, so in three suggestions for applying them as

tests to our objectives, I shall consider them together.

1. Define the objectives with and for the class. The objectives of English as a school subject, and the particular part of it to be studied in the given year, term, month. Following the syllabus, we inevitably have much the same course of study, but if you will ask your classes what their objectives are, and press the question beyond their first vague or trivial answers, you will find surprising shifts in emphasis, according to which ample adaptations may be made within the syllabus. For instance, a politically minded group can well double the time on Burke's speech, and cut down on time allotted to poetry; while a lyric-minded group will naturally want to put its emphasis on Wordsworth, Keats, and Shelley. The few poets stranded among the politicians will do more of the work that will help them, and make their contribution to the rest of the group. With the politicians among the poets, vice versa. Democracy needs all kinds; there is no higher or lower; we can so shape our teaching as to help each according to his abilities.

2. Once the objectives are established, keep them before the class in relation to each unit of work. Strengthen them with any legitimate emotional stimuli that we can—from which I exclude competitions and prizes. The competitive age has served its purpose and is dying—much of it is already dead. The desire to act scenes from *Twelfth Night* before the school is a good stimulus; the desire to write letters to the taxpayers that will result in their support of a better library is a good stimulus; the desire to have one's work appear in the school paper is a good stimulus.

3. Plan the units of work so that in each unit the pupils can see the end from the beginning. This is just a practical application of one part of the Dalton Plan. Dean Briggs points out that the daily tutelage of pupils in the secondary school makes the



transition to college far too great a stride for many of them. In all of them it tends to develop excessive dependence upon continuous detailed direction. Most day-to-day assignments seen one at a time are awful mental depressants. Yet I heard a supposedly good teacher say last week: "For tomorrow's lesson read the next fifty lines of *Gareth and Lynette* and look up every word you don't know. Now let us conjugate the verb Run." Could you surpass that as a method of murdering interest? Certainly such an assignment seems very remote from any objective that is dynamic, reasonable, and worth while. The difficulty, or rather *one* difficulty, is its piecemeal proportion. It is too picayune, too isolated, to *seem* significant, although we would all admit that the reading of those lines and the understanding of them is significant if the pupil is to comprehend the idyl.

The main point is that the pupils shall have before them at the beginning the plan for the whole piece of work so that they can see each detail in relation to the whole and to the objectives.

This sort of planning means that we choose to expend our energy in prevision as distinct from preparation, which to most of us means lesson planning and correction of papers. Formal lesson planning for each day has very little value after the first or second year of teaching. And nine tenths of our correction of papers I am convinced is not only useless but positively harmful both to ourselves and the pupils. Five hours a week of red-penciling English papers should be the outside limit for any teacher who wants to retain alert faculties—excepting, of course, the semiannual correction of Regents' examinations. I would go further and say that three of the five hours might be best spent on not more than five or six papers, trying to reach through them to the

mind of the child behind them, and to discover therein the source of the errors. Suppose he has ten dangling participles to a page. Is it a mechanical carelessness that he will correct if it's brought ten times to his attention? Or does it indicate some gap in his thinking? How can we help him span the gap? The answer to one such question may take more time than checking through the whole set of papers, but to find it may solve the difficulties of many students. I believe that 80 per cent of our mechanical errors are due neither to ignorance nor carelessness, but to defects in thinking. Our aim is to discover these and make whole the organism, rather than to apply the Bromo-Seltzer of red ink to the symptoms.

Prevision means more than preparation, planning, and correction. It means unceasing effort to attain what every great teacher must have, mastery of life. It means trying, like Matthew Arnold, to see life sanely and to see it whole, which means apart from our emotional biases. It means trying better to understand the scheme of things, this enormously complex culture of a mechanical, industrial age, what it is, why it is, how it has come about, what is its significance for our pupils, what part they will play in it, how far we can help them to shape it into something more beautiful than it is today. Prevision means that we try to see our own subject, English, in relation to the children, to the other subjects they study, to their social contacts, to the school as a whole, to the community, to life. Prevision is not something that one does formally, at a desk, by the block, with ruled paper and ink, but something that is unceasingly part of one's being. It is striving for more understanding and for an increasing sense of relationships, for greater joy in the glory of life and its mystery.

## IVANHOE IN HEADLINES

GEORGIA D. RICHARDSON

EDITOR'S NOTE: Miss Richardson is a teacher of English in the Woodrow Wilson Junior High School of San Diego, California. Readers of this article will be interested in the unique method of procedure in the classroom by which Miss Richardson correlates life in the time of *Ivanhoe* with present-day life by means of a live project.

L. W. R.

Our "high nine" classes had been reading *Ivanhoe* for several years, and recurring waves of individual notebook projects had nearly battered down the endurance of the English teachers, even as simultaneous waves of social-science notebooks, general-science notebooks, foreign-language notebooks, art notebooks, music notebooks, and handcraft notebooks had drowned the students in a sea of boredom. What reaction could this new class make to *Ivanhoe*, "different" yet appropriate and profitable? The answer lay in the peculiar nature of the class itself. It was an "A" group selected because of exceptional power in English to publish the weekly newspaper of the junior high school from which it was graduating.

After due consideration on the part of both teacher and class *The Nor-Sax News* was born, a publication which lived through four editions. The first, edited by the entire class, covered the opening events of the book up to the tournament. It was found advisable to make it a "Sunday edition," thus providing a magazine section where articles covering the setting of the novel might find logical place. A special editor (not the editor of the school paper) was chosen and a staff consisting of feature, magazine, society, news, joke, advertising, editors, artists, and cartoonists. The rest of the class were the reporters.

The front page of this edition, as in all well-regulated papers, presented the outstanding news of the day. Headlines across the page announced the coming of the tournament, and a lengthy article describ-

ing its attractions "ran over" on to another page. News of King Richard's imprisonment was received over the wire from Austria. The ravages of the recent violent storm in Sherwood Forest received front-page notice, as well as a special article on the return of the defeated Crusaders.

The magazine section offered opportunities for articles on "The Dragon of Wantley," "The Druids," a "Description of a Sunset Scene in a Forest," "The Crusades," "Work of the Knights Templars," "The Conquest of England," and similar articles drawn from the research work which had accompanied the opening chapters. A sketch of the life of the author of *Ivanhoe* was rather cleverly incorporated into an account of an interview between Lady Rowena and a fortune teller in which the latter promised "the charming ward of Sir Cedric of Rotherwood" that she should "become the heroine of a great novel and her name a household word wherever the English language is read." This article, with an account of the banquet at Rotherwood, made up the bulk of the society section, while the editorial page contained, among others, an article entitled "Why Hate the Jews?" and a letter from a subscriber complaining how "saucy Saxon churls" were misdirecting travelers in the neighborhood of Sherwood Forest.

Sense of humor was given full scope in three pages of advertisements, offering a classified section which contained such headings as: "Help Wanted," "Situation Wanted," "Armour Repaired," "Money to Loan," and the like. The chief attraction

of the advertising pages was the full-page illustrated subdivision of Rotherwood Manor, containing small farms and lots as well as the castle itself.

The second, third, and fourth editions were centered respectively around the three main events of the book, the tournament, the storming of the castle, and the trial of Rebecca. These editions being smaller than the first, the work now better organized, and the journalists more experienced, the class was divided into three staffs, each with its own editor elected by the group; and the work on the three papers proceeded simultaneously, much after the plan of the first copy. It was found necessary to call it a "weekly" paper, in order to allow for passage of time between the main events and justify the printing, in the same edition, reports of events occurring several days apart.

The headlines of edition two contained the sensational announcement, "Richard Is Free," and detailed the message received by Prince John at the tournament. The first pages were otherwise taken up with descriptions of each day of the tournament, the crowds attending, naming the notables, the tents and decorations of the challengers, and, of course, of the contests. The editorial discussed the incident of the seating of Isaac and the superstitions of the peasants. The society page gave an account of Prince John's banquet and one or two imaginative parties. Some recipes deemed appropriate to the time were offered. Illustrations of the latest styles were shown and descriptions of the gowns worn by Rowena and Rebecca at the tournament. The "ads" followed the lead of the first edition. This second paper was richer in illustration than the first, but less well organized, owing perhaps to withdrawal of supervision to some extent.

The third edition headlined the mysterious disappearance of Ivanhoe and the storming and burning of Front-de-Boeuf's

castle. Wamba's loyalty, the outrages of outlaws were discussed in editorials; and the disrespect shown by Saxons to Normans instanced by Locksley at the tournament and Cedric at the banquet were portrayed by a letter, evidently from a Norman subscriber. The death of Athelstane and Ulrica were disposed of through a page of death notices, this being deemed especially appropriate after the battle.

The fourth and final edition heralded the return of Richard, the trial of Rebecca, and the death of Bois Guilbert. The editorial in this issue being written without the knowledge of the faculty adviser, appeared without her "knowledge and consent." It gave her, however, one of those rewards for extra labor that makes teaching worth while, being a rather thoughtful and intelligent summary of the real values as well as pleasure that the class felt it had received from this activity. The society page of this issue set forth the nuptials of Wilfred and Rowena and the departure of Rebecca and Isaac on their "Spanish tour," while the resurrection of Athelstane, of course, made a feature article of rich possibilities. The "ad" page in this edition was perhaps the most original of the four, containing, among other matters, testimonials from the Clerk of Copmanhurst as to the excellence of the pasties of the York Pasty Shoppe, and one from Prior Aymer to the delicacy of its wines. The last advertisement (also a surprise) was that of an auction sale in which *The Nor-Sax News* announced the closing of its doors and offered the entire printing and office equipment for sale.

The entire project was typed, in double columns, on ordinary-sized typing paper by members of the class who were also in the advanced typing class. The sheets were fastened together at the top by brass pins. The typing was undoubtedly our greatest problem, the difficulties arising from lack of time as well as experience on the part of the youthful operators. This part of the



work was done out of school hours. The titles, headlines, illustrations, and many of the advertisements were printed by the staff artists in India ink, and a few cartoons of some of the principal characters adorned the pages of the later editions. Jokes, as such, were rigorously confined to the material found in the book and proved to be a little beyond the ability of the class to interpret in modern terms. They were, consequently, a negligible quantity. Each edition contained a list of the staff, with the contributions of each member; this, while not strictly newspaper procedure, served the double purpose of preserving the author's name in the halls of fame, and of giving the faculty adviser a convenient check on the amount and character of work accom-

plished. The whole project was enclosed and is preserved in a portfolio made of bogus paper bound in linen.

In closing this account the faculty adviser would say that, while to her adult eye the word is decidedly immature, lacking in organization, faulty at times even in composition, she prides herself most upon this, that she was given the grace to keep her hands off for the most part, and therefore can assert that it is truly a "pupil activity." It may be of interest to say that the present journalism class, fired by the accounts of the "fun if hard work," of the previous group, has elected to pursue a similar project with the Odyssey. They are considering publishing it on Olympus with Athene as the editor.

## A CLASS UNDERTAKING IN WRITING EXPOSITION

CLARENCE STRATTON

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. Stratton is director of English of the Cleveland (Ohio) High Schools. He is a national authority on the drama and author of several books in this field. He is author of a number of textbooks for junior and senior high schools, as well as of books for teachers of English. His book entitled Paul of France was one of the ten best sellers in junior literature last year. This article represents a piece of concrete work developed in the classroom by Dr. Stratton as a teacher of English.*

L. W. R.

In the writing of expository material in high-school classes there is likely to develop (for the teacher at least) a sense of monotony, because so many of the topics chosen are of the "how-to-do" kind and because of a slight fear that many of the papers are merely rehash of articles already in print. When the pupil offers an explanation of some technical process or mechanical procedure, most teachers of English are entirely and admittedly incapable of judging the worth and accuracy of the content of the pupil composition. Even in a specialized technical or commercial high school, teachers of English feel dazed by explanations that try to make clear the internal workings of a comptometer or the penetra-

bility of the air by short-wave lengths. So too are the pupils often confused by these pseudoscientific expositions, frequently the authors of the compositions themselves.

One kind of coöperative composition undertaking seems to avoid most of the already cited objections to the preparation of expository papers.

Allotting enough time before the end of the term to allow adequate discussion, thinking, writing, and revision, the general topic for treatment is introduced to the class. The teacher asks the pupils if they can, working together, make a list of all the different kinds of work done that term in the English class. If the class is organized into committees, these groups may submit

their jottings for compilation by the whole class. In a few minutes it will become perfectly apparent to the pupils that all their diversified entries can be grouped under about a dozen main headings—though this number will vary in different classes and under varying courses of study. The following typical list of fourteen such principal headings was furnished by a teacher in one large city high school.<sup>1</sup>

1. Written composition. 2. Oral composition. 3. Class reading. 4. Outside reading. 5. Memorization. 6. Outlining. 7. Spelling. 8. Vocabulary. 9. Review of capitalization. 10. Grammar. 11. Punctuation. 12. Rhetoric. 13. Figures of speech. 14. Versification.

The preparation of such a list is a mental stock-taking of the progress of the term's work, valuable in itself for the thinking it induces, and helpful as a survey review. But what is the purpose for making this list with all its subordinate entries?

The teacher explains that the class is going to prepare a book of expository articles explaining the work of the term, each section written by a pupil. Every expository article will be planned by both its author and the group or class, frankly discussed and fully planned, read for revision, editing, and acceptance by the editorial board. This editorial board may be the whole class, a single group already in being, a newly appointed or elected committee; it may or may not include the teacher.

At this point the teacher should announce that when all the manuscripts are finished they will be bound into a volume and deposited in the school library for future consultation, in the principal's office, or in the room of the head of the department of English for the help and guidance of other teachers, especially beginning teachers new to the school or to the term in which exposition is emphasized.

With all the discussion the preparation of the list has provoked and with the papers of the pupils covered with their preliminary jottings, the period has very likely come to an end. Between this first period and the next, there will have been talk by the pupils among themselves and more or less choice of topic for treatment.

The next step is the completion of the ordered list to serve as a class outline. Under *written composition*, what various kinds of writing did we practise this term? The section dealing with this topic may evolve in this form.

- I. Written composition
  1. Exposition
  2. Essay types
    - a) Spectator style
    - b) Modern style
  3. Friendly letter
  4. Business letter
  5. Paragraph
  6. Book review
  7. Creative work

Which of these topics shall be chosen or assigned? The remarks of the pupils now become discriminating expositions. There is surely no necessity of explaining the main heading; everybody knows what written composition tries to do. But there is a reason for explaining what the class has tried to do and accomplished in actually writing expositions. There is no reason for preparing a paper on *essay types*; the two explanations of the subtopics under that entry will make all clear. Shall a paper be devoted to paragraphs? Why, no; every composition will illustrate the principles of writing good paragraphs. Thus the class decides that the first chief division affords topics for five pupils, who if chosen or assigned may begin at once to plan their material and make their outlines.

The general division of *spelling* provides two interesting things to explain:

#### VII. Spelling

1. Confusingly similar words

<sup>1</sup>I am indebted to Mrs. Mabel S. Finley of Collinwood High School, Cleveland, for the entries listed in this article.

## 2. Suffix formations

Both of these may be accepted by the class though the prosaic prescribed spelling drill list of the term is rejected.

Under *vocabulary* the class will in all likelihood agree that the regular spelling list—though not worth including where it logically belongs—must be considered here.

## VIII. Vocabulary

1. Use of words from spelling list
2. Words from reading

What shall be written about punctuation? Here are six entries listed by the pupils.

## XI. Punctuation

1. The colon
2. The semicolon
3. The dash
4. The parenthesis
5. The apostrophe
6. The comma—review

Realizing that one of the chief problems of all pupil writers is determining what *not* to say (recall the long-winded, rambling reports on outside reading), the teacher at this time must prevent any pupil from attempting to write a long treatise on the use of the dash. Let one competent pupil cover generally all the principles studied that term in punctuation.

Similarly a general treatment will serve for XIII—figures of speech.

The teacher who has glanced at the fourteen main headings will perceive at once that some entries are intrinsically more difficult for pupil explanation than others. For these, he must tactfully exercise the best kind of guidance. Perhaps the entries under  *rhetoric*  look somewhat like this list.

## XII. Rhetoric

1. Position
2. Separation
3. Proper subordination
4. Repetition
5. Periodic sentence
6. Balance and antithesis
7. Climax

Discussion and decision may determine that of these only the third, fifth, sixth, and seventh shall be treated by the pupils.

Following this method of inclusion, selection, rejection, assignment, and planning, the list from an actual class provides twenty-eight illuminating, worth-while, definite topics for pupil effort over several days. If there are thirty pupils in the class, they will undoubtedly think of additional topics to make up the full quota. The class had one or two periods of instruction in the use of reference material—books, magazines, lists, files, catalogues—in the library. The pupils visited the main library or the nearby branch. Are these worth explaining? Or any detailed phases of them? Would an explanation of the term's work be complete without such papers, or at least one paper? Besides the expository articles, what else should such a volume contain? What may it include? Index—worth considering. Table of contents—certainly. That list must be carefully prepared after all the individual contributions have been assembled. Some pupils will assuredly think of it—a preface, an introduction! Exactly—an important portion of the book; an exercise that will demand the most skillful planning, the most interesting writing of the entire volume.

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## VITALIZING DESCRIPTION AND NARRATION FOR JUNIOR-HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS

ARTHUR M. SEYBOLD

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Arthur M. Seybold is principal of the widely known Thomas Jefferson Junior High School of Cleveland, Ohio. Among the many interesting features of this school is the opportunity offered to the superior groups of pupils in an effort to discover talent. Mr. Seybold is chairman of the Junior High School Section of the National Education Association for the year 1929-1930.*

L. W. R.

Junior-high-school children live in a world of sense perception. They hear, they see, they feel, and they taste life. Their experiences are marked at times with touches of abstract thinking, but in the long reach of their daily activities they are pursuing interest-contact leads which are dominated by actual concrete endeavors. They like to mix in the mêlée of things, to be dreaming of dynamic doings, and to be learning by moving their minds through a changing scheme of tangible pursuits. Attempt to control the thoughts of the early adolescent, attempt to turn his interests to the delights of purely abstract reasoning, and you will meet with subtle opposition at every turn. Direct his thinking by centering it about an activity which meets with his approval and you will lead him to unexpected mental achievements.

Through the instrumentality of projects interesting to children, then, the modern teacher has found many avenues rich in contact leads. These leads have been extremely valuable to the alert educator, especially when directed towards achievements in subjective forms of expression. In contemplating the invisible the adolescent must pass through concrete processes in order to reach realities, either in the realm of the emotions, the appreciations, or the imagination.

In this paper I shall attempt to give a brief exposition of four interest-contact leads directed towards specific achievements in subjective forms of expression. I shall

attempt to describe four project devices which I have found effective in producing good narration and description from junior-high-school children. These agencies are found in the use of music, in the instrumentality of pictures, in the avenue of pantomimic interpretation, and in the employment of projects involving preparation for printed publications. Many more agencies might be similarly described but the four mentioned above will illustrate adequately the potency of this approach.

Music may be easily employed to stimulate the imagination. Pianos, violins, cellos, and other musical instruments are frequently accessible to the classroom teacher. When these instruments are not to be had, and when student or teacher musicians can not be found to play them, victrolas are always available and a library of excellent records may be obtained at a reasonable expenditure of money and effort.

What infinite delight does this music infuse into the regular work of English classes. It furnishes what junior-high-school children demand, a wealth of contact material. It brings an interplaying of emotion and imagination to any literary study into which it is introduced, and it gives an added touch far-reaching in its effectiveness.

Try the Berceuse by Järnefelt when you are seeking a written or an oral expression of Walt Whitman's *O Captain! My Captain!* Play the record softly so that the voice of a reader may be heard above a

soothing background of music. The effect is just as pleasing in the classroom as it is in the theater, or as we now frequently experience the same effects over the radio. Follow the reading and the music accompaniment with an attempt at some form of written expression. The results are often startling. The imagination, fired by the soothing suggestions traveling in the wake of many of our simpler masterpieces, is made free, and beautiful description or narration may be unleashed.

Any English teacher desiring to extend his experiences in this field might attempt the following project with Victor Herbert's *Natoma* Dagger Dance. Be sure that the class is prepared before you begin. See that every student is supplied with pencil and paper so that he may record his thoughts the moment the inspiration reaches its climax. Then announce that the students will be asked to write a description of an Indian war dance. Read descriptions of war dances from novels or from books describing Indian life. Note telling words and phrases. Stop for these words, driving their mental pictures home, expressions such as the booming of tom-toms, dusky warriors, weird chant, rhythmic thud of feet, painted savages, barbaric music, lurking shadows, frantic cries, feverish vigor, incessant pounding of war drums, and any similar phrases tucked away in the passages.

After ten minutes of reading and discussion, the *Natoma* Dagger Dance may then be played. Use a fiber needle so that the music may be heard just clearly enough to make articulate the images which should be crowding at the point of each pencil in the classroom. This record is sure fire in any junior-high-school group.

Such records as *From an Indian Lodge*, *To a Water Lily*, *To a Wild Flower*, *At the Brook*, *Boots*, *In the Hall of the Mountain King*, *The Swan*, *Handel's Largo*, or the *Volga Boatman* are equally effective.

If there is any doubt in the mind of a

critical reader, let him read the following descriptive narration to a quiet accompaniment of *In the Hall of the Mountain King* by Grieg. This bit was drawn from the imagination of a young junior-high-school student:

#### The Troll Dance

The sun is going down and darkness seems to have enveloped the earth. The mountain trolls have gathered to dance before their king. They form a circle which is very large. The king steps forth from his cave and stands in the center of the weird ring. Two trolls creep into the strange group with some wood. A small fire is lighted in the center of the circle. Gradually the flames climb upward and phantomlike flashes of light pierce the outer darkness.

The dance begins. The creatures crouch on their hands and knees and mumble to themselves. Slowly they begin to creep around in a circular form, moving their hideous heads up and down.

The king stands erect within the ring crying out strange words which echo through the forest. His commands pierce the bestial torpor which grips the minds of each subject, for, suddenly, each troll arises and begins to scamper wildly around the circle screaming at the top of his voice. Then the circle breaks and away they go screaming through the dark shadows of the mountains. —WILLIAM GLAZIER

Bits of description which contain the essence of a chapter or canto of a book may be similarly developed. Such records as *To Spring*, *Hail to the Chief*, *Ave Maria*, and *Pomp and Circumstance* may lend themselves to scenes taken from the *Lady of the Lake*. The class which wrote the program lesson from which *The Fiery Cross* is taken most surely caught the spirit of the poem.

#### The Fiery Cross

(Play *Ingrid's Lament* by Grieg as the description is read.)

A beautiful morning dawned. Everything should have been at rest and peace, but the brave chieftain, Roderick Dhu, was troubled. He paced up and down the shore of the island with his impatient hand upon his sword. The band stood off aghast while a heap of withered boughs of rowan and juniper were piled beneath a tripod of shivers of oak. Brian, Brian the hermit stood with head bowed, moodily frowning at the shadows which seemed to

stifle his spirit. His grizzled beard and matted hair obscured a visage in which despair struggled with the knowledge of the duties which were at hand.

Soon everything was prepared. A goat, the patriarch of his flock, was placed near the fire. Brian lighted the fiery cross and held it high above his head, pronouncing a curse upon the clansman who might not come to the muster place. "Woe to the clansman," he chanted, "who shall view this symbol of sepulchral yew and not come to his chieftain's side." The band took up the curse, "Woe to the clansman, woe." An eagle screamed exultingly from a mountain top near by. The wolves withdrew from their dens and sought the cover of distant hills. They knew the voice of Alpine war.

Again Brian chanted, "Woe to the wretch who fails to rear at this dread sign the ready spear." The women took up the cry and echoed, "Woe to the wretch, woe to the traitor, woe."

The hermit then thrust the burning cross into the blood of the goat and passed the dripping symbol into the impatient hand of Roderick Dhu. The leader handed the fiery cross to a runner, Malise, who flashed quickly from the scene, carrying the news of war to the henchmen of Clan Alpine.

The flames flickered and then died out. Everybody went away. Only the lifeless form of the goat and the pale ashes of the ceremonial fire remained, mute witnesses of this strange ritual of primitive times.—JEROME AUSDEITCHER.

Pictures have been used by instructors for so many years that I hesitate to give any exposition of their teaching function, yet because I am fully conscious of the fact that illustrations have found a meager place in the average classroom I shall take this opportunity to accent their use.

For some time I sought a convenient means of making a quick transition from facts under discussion in class to the infinite reaches of the imagination. I searched for material with quick suggestive reaches, something which would challenge each individual and which would lure him to by-paths rich in intangible meanings. I followed threads of fiction into illusive fields of fancy, and I experimented with the open ways of pantomime and the drama. All of these paths did lead to other uses, but they did not bring the ready, the facile, the immediate approach I had in mind.

I was searching for a means of producing a quick transition from the minutiae of daily classroom activities to creative expanses that would make articulate expressions of thought half formed in groping childish minds. I desired to find a means of aiding students in shaping clear mental pictures, vaguely drawn in spirit, yet earnestly seeking definite artistic form.

When children are groping for truth in the strenuous struggle which the classroom of the new school inspires, accessories of infinite variety are indispensable. These devices are not considered as ends in themselves, they are merely devices and should be employed as such. Infinite inhibitions trammel child minds. Unfavorable environments limit and retard an adequate release of powers which, when they are made free, will grow into rare personalities. Knowing this I felt that my search for the narrow span that would instantly lead from the classroom to dreamland was worthv of much effort.

Motion pictures were tried and proved to be too expensive, and to require too much time to achieve the end which I sought. Slides cost more money than we could afford for the extended use we had planned to give the idea.

One day I was called to a social-studies classroom where an historical frieze had been painted by a committee of interested explorers. The frieze was not thumb-tacked along the wall as was the usual custom. The students had made a panorama of their pictures, placing them on two voluminous, translucent rolls set in an illuminated stage. Two pupils operated the illustrations while other members of the committee alternately gave the results of their investigations in the subject at hand. Every member of the audience was intensely interested in the illustrated reports. It is true the youthful lecturers had prepared good expositions, but the pictures were such a surprising aid to thought that



I was compelled to be impressed with their quick, graphic force.

I left the room with the feeling that this was the answer to my problem. If I could find an inexpensive means of bringing illustrations quickly to English recitations I should then make possible a timely added stimulus to juvenile composition.

This was accomplished with collections of illustrations gathered from every conceivable source. Books, magazines, art reproductions, postcards, European railway posters, advertisements—all of these sources were sought with success.

Opaque projection lanterns with translucent screens were found to give excellent results. Dark shades and electric contacts of ready access were added to our classroom equipment. In these accessories our students and teachers found a most excellent avenue of effective presentation for illustrative material.

Narration and description are easily given unique motivation by the introduction of beautifully illuminated illustrations. Let the teacher read poems of autumn, let him display pictures of autumn one after the other, and then let him put these illustrations in a conspicuous place before his class. Then display the most beautiful picture upon the screen in a dimly lighted room and let the children write their autumn thoughts. After fifteen minutes of writing, divide the class into committees for group elimination and have the best paragraphs read to the class. The aid which a well-selected collection of pictures will bring is quite noticeable in every bit of description or poem produced in a lesson of this kind. Frequently children will break through barriers of restraint and they will exhibit a fluidity of expression found only in the inspired writings of rare minds. This is a result obtained by this contact device when it was brought into the tangible world of childhood and was made the center of an interesting activity.

#### An Autumn Evening

The sun is setting  
In the west,  
Making a picture of gold.  
The leaves are  
Tawny and red  
As far as the eye can see.  
I sit in the grass,  
The misty green-brown grass,  
And gaze  
Till the moon,  
The clear-cut white moon,  
And the twinkling stars come.  
The call of my mother  
I do not hear:  
The Autumn is too perfect.

—DOROTHY HARTMAN

Another interesting form of motivation is found in the use of pantomime. Children delight in appearing to be what they are not. They have enjoyed this form of expression since the beginning of time. Perhaps they will always retain this characteristic, no one knows. At any rate, in our present enlightened state of civilization they have not been lifted entirely above the voodoo spell of the African witch-doctor or the occult incantations of the Indian magician. They delight in assuming the rôle of a king or of a beggar, the character of a queen or of a kitchen maid, of a sage or of a buffoon—in fact any rôle in which the imagination may riot in masquerade.

It is this instinct which prompts the savage to don a mask, to beat with frenzied vigor upon a war drum, to chant cries of despair to his gods, and to engage in fantastic dances interpretative of the delusive show and the occasion which has called his strange dramatization into being. The moment the primitive man dons his mask a new being is wrung from the depths of his soul, and he becomes a queer admixture of what he is and what he is not.

The ancient Greeks found delight in pantomime. They too gesticulated and danced, more majestically, perhaps, and with more graceful control of the emotions but the same instinct for an external por-

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trayal of the conflicts of the human soul found visual expression in their dramatic pageants.

Thus pantomime has come to us through the reach of the years, in the pageants of the medieval church and in the delightful medium of the aesthetic dance. The joy experienced in this form of artistic expression is as universal as hunger or mother love. This is why children like to become ogres at Halloween, to groan like Old Nick in torment, to prance through the streets with wild witch cries, and to tap tattoos upon our windows. The joy of it, the thrill of it is universal.

Children like to write narratives for pantomime. If a careful approach is made, the dynamic force of this primitive medium of dramatic expression may be used in many ways. The teacher may illustrate a poem with simplified paraphrasing, he may inspire original stories, or he may give zest to a classic by having the students write colorful sketches of dramatic incidents.

I have observed the latter form of narration used with many of the books studied in junior high school. *Rip Van Winkle*, *Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, *Treasure Island*, *Arabian Nights*, *Otto of the Silver Hand*, *Paul of France*, *The Lance of Kanana*—all of these stories lend themselves to forms of pantomime.

A dark room, a light draped background, screens to produce the illusion of a stage, and dim, colored lighting effects are all that is needed. When children have observed one effective performance with this medium they may easily adapt it to any novel or story. Once the production is under way no added stimulus is needed for practice work in composition.

The story of Joseph was thus written by one of our eighth-grade classes. The narrative was prepared by students in committees, selecting dramatic moments in a narrative form which would lend itself to pantomimic interpretation. The scenes

were named as follows: Sold into Slavery, The Deception, The Prison, At the Court of the King, Famine and Plenty, and The Recognition. Music and costuming were added to the production as it grew into being, so that when the performance was completed a fourfold appeal was given to the audience: music, costuming, reading, and pantomime.

Let me quote The Deception as I take it from the booklet in which the class placed their creative bit.

#### The Deception

Soon after they had sold Joseph the brothers returned to the home of their father. The sky was filled with a strange darkness, there was no moon, and the stars struggled in vain to shine through the clouds which hid them. Jacob was standing at the door of his tent gazing out over the barren plain and searching for a sign of the foreboding evil in the dark clouds overhead.

A murmur of distant voices penetrated the stillness. The sound grew nearer. His sons were approaching, and as they came to the great tent he raised his hand to welcome them.

"Ah! I am glad you have returned," began Jacob, "I had feared that Joseph would never come back to me. Now, I shall never let him leave my sight. Come hither, Joseph. Come, I am speaking to you. I sent you out with good news. I sent you out clothed in a coat of many colors."

"A coat of many colors," faltered one of the brothers as he stepped forward with a blood-stained garment. "Is this the coat, father? We found it by the roadside and feared that a wild beast had devoured a stranger in our land."

"He has been killed, alas Joseph has been taken away from me," faltered the aged father.

"Then it is the coat of our young brother that we found by the roadside," murmured the sons of Jacob, feigning to weep as they crept off into the shadows of the night.

The father remained at the door of his tent lost in silent grief. The sky was filled with a deeper darkness, there was no moon, the stars were now lost in the dense gloom which filled the heavens, and a melancholy wind swept over the barren plain.

Students find greater delight, perhaps, in observing their thoughts in print than in any other form of literary expression. Our schools are just beginning to realize the potency of this medium. A few insti-

tutions have published books, many are now issuing magazines and pamphlets, and every school has its newspaper. The newspaper is a most excellent stimulus for the exercise of writing. It fills its particular function admirably, but it does not provide a sufficient impetus to original writing along the lines of poetry and simple exposition which children create with ready facility. The snap and the fire demanded by the school newspaper does not lend itself to the meditative, the slow descriptive style practised by students who lack the vivacity of the born reporter. It is true that any English class should foster and cultivate the meditative spirit and should develop this aptitude in our best students; yet the approval of one class and one teacher is not enough for a distinctive bit of work. Many schools have realized this need and a large number of pamphlets are beginning to find circulation. Projects, plays, poems, expositions of school activities, and descriptions of merit have found their way into print.

All of the material submitted to editorial boards for publication has not been good enough to print, and a great deal of inferior work has been published. This is as it should be. The chief value is not found

in the number of youthful geniuses who have been discovered; the value is obtained from the impetus towards creative work. Unquiet creative spirits struggling for expression have found an avenue for a new release. Personalities thus made free have unfolded into new entities, and unique paragraphs of narration and description have found places on the pages of school publications.

Thus with the agencies of music, pictures, pantomime, printed pamphlets, and similar project devices, junior-high-school students have found stimulating motivation for English composition. The suggestions given here may prove helpful to the readers who have been hardy enough to wade through my exposition; and, again, these suggestions may appeal to my readers in much the same way that similar admonitions appealed to a student in one of our classes of creative writing not long ago. The new genius wrote:

#### Stuff

If I didn't feel  
That I ought to do  
All this stuff  
I think, perhaps, I'd like to;  
But I do—  
That's the way with everything.

## LITERATURE WITH LOW DIVISIONS

WINIFRED RIGGS

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Mrs. Riggs is a teacher of English in the Baker Junior High School of Denver. For several years she has been specializing in the work of teaching the ill-favored children. Her work has attracted considerable attention.*

L. W. R.

In our present-day approach to education, we take into consideration that large group of underprivileged children who must be trained to take a place in the world of tomorrow. We have proved that they can take an economic place, we must fit them to take a social place, even though that place be humble. They, as well as men and women of average and superior intelligence,

are going to have leisure time which they must learn to fill, and from the point of view of one teaching them literature now, they can be helped to fill it with pleasure and profit. It is true that this class has to face the fact that there are a host of things which they cannot understand, and they are prone to feel that there is but little for them in the finer things of life. They



are handicapped, but once let them thoroughly realize that there is enjoyment to be found on the printed page, aside from sensational matter, and some of them, at least, may gain a desire to search for that pleasure in the days to come.

In teaching children of this group we must realize at the outset that there must be a different set of standards for them than those held to for groups of higher abilities. We must not expect from them the same appreciation or comprehension. If they can learn that there is entertainment for them and enjoyment, if they search patiently, then they have learned a great deal and they may become inspired to continue in later years. I have no notion that they should be taught to appreciate the appeal of the sunset, the beauty of the use of this word or that phrase, or the thrill of the epic in poetry. They do not care for the abstract, nor are they capable of handling it. Their literature must be in terms of the concrete. In our teaching we need material that will appeal to their limit of intelligence in form and in wording and that will at the same time have a more mature appeal as to content. Such material is all too scarce. These children are older chronologically than their grade, and many of them are sensitive to the fact that they are different from children of their own age. They resent reading from books labeled for third- and fourth-grade children. (For training in reading and comprehension we do have some material that is good, as Pearson and Hunt, *Every Day Readers*, Stone's *Silent Readers*.) These people are mildly interested in the world, but they need to know as well as others that other people live and move and have their being. And so we spend many hours with simpler stories of many kinds, largely informational in character, more or less within the range of their comprehension and understanding. We do want them to

know that there are other kinds of reading also.

In our system a requirement for seven B Literature is taken from Mallory's *Days of Chivalry*. The text is far too hard for these low groups and we do not have available copies of the King Arthur stories in simpler language. Still, they as well as others are interested in the story part. They respond to tales of adventure and of chivalry, even as do other children. A suggested method of teaching these stories is as follows: Tell them some background stories of the old times in England, of the ways that stories have grown up about men of ages past; then a list of the characters that will be foremost in the stories that are to follow may be placed on the board. Let each child have a copy of the text, though it is hard, to follow if he wishes, and read to them the stories, stopping to identify the characters listed, and to bring out any incident that seems to attract their attention. They thrill to the deeds of Gareth and vie with one another in finding out just how many knights he was instrumental in bringing to Arthur's standard. A noticeable proportion of the class, after the story had been treated in this way, checked out of the library the simpler Arthur stories and from these some of them wandered on to Robin Hood tales. A teacher will feel that something has carried over when a child much below the normal in intelligence asks a year later, "When are we going to read some more stories like those King Arthur stories we read last year?"

Again we have the *Legend of Sleepy Hollow* assigned. Turn the retarded seven A group loose on it and they are lost, discouraged, and "never did like to read anyhow." Describe to them the general surroundings, get them to tell you of some places that are just naturally "spooky" and set the stage for the story. Read the description of Ichabod Crane and help them to picture him in detail. They will do it,

and they will enjoy the thought of him in charge of a schoolroom. They relish the rivalry between Brom Bones and the schoolmaster. They will not get all the allusions, nor any large proportion of them, but who cares. They sense very quickly who is riding so hard after Ichabod and they will be most eager to tell you what happened to the poor man. Probably they will not seek out Washington Irving after that, but they will have appreciated a "keen story" and that will not be wholly lost.

One more concrete illustration. If the social-science and English courses of study allow, find out when your class is about to study the period of Jefferson, Hamilton, and the Louisiana Purchase. At that time take up *The Man Without a Country*. I usually tell my classes a story the first day of the need of the United States for land, of soldiers stationed around the mouth of the Mississippi, of a most fascinating man, at one time a Government official but who had a grudge against the Government and who thought that he might be able to set up a government for himself across the Mississippi. We will probably mention our flag ritual and the twofold definition of a traitor. Having set the scenes, I turn them loose on the story. They get an unbelievable amount and we talk it all over afterward. Was Nolan's punishment just or unjust? Did he get all or more than "was coming to him?" Is this story true? Sometimes they are ready to fight for their opinions.

In teaching poetry we find more difficulties. Here, even more than in prose we need to avoid the abstract. If we can present to the low divisions narrative poems, with a point and a minimum of descriptions,

they will enjoy poetry. For them we have hunted out poems of this nature, very simple ones for the lower junior-high-school grades. These nine- and ten-year-old fourteen-year-olds enjoy Eugene Field's *The Duel*, *The Night Wind*, *Little Boy Blue*. The poem *Columbus* on Columbus Day, has a real appeal. They appreciate Field's *The Owl Critic*. I teach these for the story, the enjoyment of the sense and the theme, and do not trouble about any beauty of diction or meter. If the poems are simple enough, they read for themselves and we work out the theme together. Involved poems are read to them and they are urged to find good passages and to make suggestions as to the story. Eighth graders cannot understand all of *The Highwayman* but they love the swing, the rhythm, and the story. Long poems are beyond most of them alone. *Miles Standish* read to one class whose accomplishments in reading tests ranked them with the fourth and fifth graders proved very interesting and they assured a visitor most earnestly that now they would read such a poem if they found it in the library. They might try; they wouldn't succeed, but from this poem they learned some history, some Indian customs and lore, and they got a very interesting story. They found that entertainment does exist in such things, and though not one out of the class may ever try to read a long poem alone, they have learned that there is an interesting story there and they may be encouraged in the days to come to try and hunt out something that will fill an idle hour and help shape their thoughts, even though those thoughts are not such as will move nations.

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## JUNIOR-HIGH-SCHOOL POETS

EMILY CATLETT

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Miss Catlett is teacher of superior groups of the Thomas Jefferson Junior High School, Cleveland, Ohio. For some time she had charge of the Department of Measurements in the Collinwood High School of Cleveland. She now has charge of two classes in creative writing at the Thomas Jefferson Junior High School. The work of these classes is given unique exposition in the article.*

L. W. R.

Verse writing, like everything else, is an acquirable art, given a modicum of imagination and a half hour a day.

"But it isn't easy," said Pooh to himself, as he looked at what had once been Owl's House, "Because Poetry and Hums aren't things which you get, they're things which get you. And all you can do is to go where they can find you."

So that is the purpose for which our creative writing class was organized—to provide a place where Poetry and Hums may come and get children who are interested in them. I believe that underneath it there is a sort of quadruple theory, educationally sound, about talent being given a chance to develop, appreciation coming only through attempt, facility in writing being primarily a matter of practice, and poetry providing a satisfactory release from the grind of ordinary life.

The number of those interested in such a class was so large that selection had to be made and it was done largely on a basis of talent already manifested, usually in English classes. No one who showed the least spark of ability in this line was deprived of membership but in a few weeks it settled down to a more comfortable number.

Their programs were arranged so that the younger students, seven A's and eight B's, should attend two days a week and the older students three days, though this arrangement is by no means ironclad. Many come every day.

Sometimes we read to each other, and sometimes we write, and sometimes we just

sit and wish it were time for lunch. For poets—even junior-high-school ones—are creatures of temperament and need occasional lapses. Lapse is what we do better than anything else when visitors come, as they frequently do, eager to see Poets In Action. Vera will glower at the beaming observer and write something about Trammelled Art and Lois will lower herself to this:

Visitors are coming,  
Turn on the brains,  
They'll think we are dumb  
If no poetry rains.

and Richard will decide that eight lines are really enough for any sonnet and stop with:

Why do men die in defense of a flag,  
Dare all for the sake of a formless name?  
It's only some bunting, a silken rag!  
What do they want: is it glory, fame?  
What do they see at the end of the road  
That leads them on to the gates of death?  
Paradise? Valhalla? A hero's abode?  
Fools! They shall all feel the Devil's breath!

But what I started out to say was that there has been no set routine, naturally. There are days when listening to words, however beautiful, is insufferable; days when writing them is impossible. So we have gone along, letting each one care more or less for itself. We have read poetry of all styles and ages and found something to like and dislike in all. And there is emerging a constantly ripening appreciation of beauty which, it is hoped, will be lifelong.

There are days when every one holds a chin and stares, finally shouting at me,



"Can't you give us an idea?" Today was one of these. I was holding my chin and staring, too, not having the required commodity. But what is weather for, if not emergencies? I walked to the window.

"Fog," I said, "Choking and blinding fog, obscuring all except us." Then I sat down and held my chin again.

In a few minutes a girl who stays in the class for reasons known only to herself, for she has written nothing of much value, came up with the following, which I shall quote only for purposes of contrast:

The fog draws before our eyes  
A gray mist  
Making everything disappear,  
Only letting us see  
When we reach the place  
Where we are going,  
And making things disappear  
That we just walked out of.

No imagination, just a wordy and crude paraphrase of my remark. Lois, however, turned in this:

Fog is a magician  
Who curtains round my mind.  
I cannot see before me;  
Blackness is behind.  
The Past has gone forever,  
The Future's mystery—  
For Fog's a shrewd magician  
And the Present's all I see.

There is no triumph that comes to a teacher, I fancy, that can compare with the knowledge that one has wakened and helped develop a talent that might possibly have slept forever. It is a sort of recompense—call it apology if you will—for all the worthless things teachers can't help doing.

I want to speak a little of the "release" aspect of a verse-writing class, one of its most important reasons for being. I shall use Louise to illustrate my point. She comes, a remarkably brilliant girl, from a discouragingly sordid home atmosphere, devoid of all beauty, of all cultural inspiration. She has an unfortunate disposition, so far as contact with her contempor-

aries is concerned, and is a great deal too introspective. It is a splendid thing to bring into the light germs of introspection; they die there and one is the better for having killed the bogey. Louise's poems are practically all of this germ-killing type—and masterpieces of self-analysis. I shall give only *Companions*, which moved me so deeply that I could only accept it silently and wonder if she suspected how truly she had written.

Fear is my companion,  
He takes me everywhere  
He sits and wrinkles all my plaits  
And ruffles up my hair.

He argues with me ever,  
He always disagrees,  
He gives me queer sensations,  
Brings shakings to my knees.

I like him for his cowardice,  
I love his disposition,  
He comes to me quite dubiously  
And asks for recognition.

Fear is my companion,  
He takes me everywhere;  
And you can always tell us  
By our rude distrustful air.

I am not among those who consider rhyme a handicap to creative expression or a smoke screen to cover the lack of imaginative content. Some children may talk in free verse but I never met any who did as it has been my experience that unrhymed verse, both the reading and writing of it, has a rather limited appeal to the child of junior-high-school age. I am not referring to such forms as the hokku, cinquain, or tanka, for they are turned out in abundance and their specific requirements provide a problem in word compression and control equal to the rhyme problem, and are good training, if nothing more.

Here are three cinquains:

#### *A Cloudy Day*

The world  
Waiting with a  
Bouquet to greet the sun,  
Mopes, resentful against faithless  
Beauty.

*Futility*

Life burns  
My spirit down.  
It drifts on hopelessly—  
The horror of a ship burning  
At sea.

*Pride*

I aimed  
Too high for it.  
I knew that I would fail,  
Yet I am proud, and can't admit  
Defeat.

"If a person have imagination, experience appears to me of little use," said one of Disraeli's heroes, and it is an opinion one may apply to children's poetry when it says things like the following:

You laughed and hurt my pride,  
You made fun of my face,  
Of my hair—so black—  
And my eyes—they were green.  
But some one came along  
And called me beautiful:  
My hair wasn't black, it was ebon,  
And my eyes were seas of jade!  
I told you so; you laughed again.  
I simply can't understand  
Why I should stay with you  
When you laugh at me.  
But here I am.

It is a problem that has perplexed older ones than she.  
To say that we get from a thing only what we put in it is a hackneyed truism; but it is fundamental to every achievement. Why should we not assume, then, that a child will be a real lover of poetry only when he has at least attempted this form of expression? Of course some will have taken to it early—there are few children who have never tried it—but it is usually a close-guarded secret and admitted only when what they have regarded as a phenomenon peculiar to themselves is taken as a matter-of-fact thing and given approbation and a

sympathetic atmosphere to expand in. Progressive schools are beginning to provide them and children are enjoying a creative experience which will enrich their lives permanently.

Now we publish in the school paper and in attractive booklets the things once confined to treasured notebooks or else not written at all.

*Night*

The woods are deep with shadows,  
The mists on the river lie,  
The moon is a silver sickle  
And star-points pierce the sky.

Wander alone and listen  
When the nights are cold and still,  
Hear the owl's call and the loon's call,  
And the cry of the whippoorwill.

Or from a more philosophic mind:

*Belittling*

When I am neatly rotted  
Underneath the ground,  
People still will laugh and cry  
And the world keep going around.  
And when I think it over  
It makes me feel so small  
That I half-believe that even I  
Do not matter at all!

And the universal complaint of Down-trodden Female stirs these lines:

*Dissatisfaction*

I wish I were a little boy,  
I'd romp and climb up trees,  
And get as dirty as I want  
And fall and skin my knees.

But as it is, I'm just a girl  
And must keep clean and bright  
And practise music every day—  
It doesn't seem quite right.

"So there it is," said Pooh (although he wasn't writing articles), "It's come different from what I thought it would, but it's come." Which is a way things have.

## SENTENCE STUDY IN THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

ALFRED A. WRIGHT

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Mr. Wright is director of English in the West Hartford (Connecticut) public schools. In this article he has revealed to us not only some of the weaknesses with which colleges charge the secondary schools, but he has also given us a very sane treatment of correcting these weaknesses.*

L. W. R.

There came to me recently a paper entitled "Suggestions from the English Staff of Smith College." It contained the findings of a meeting at which each member of the staff had reported the specific weaknesses most common in her classes. The following is an extract from that paper:

"II. *Punctuation.* It was generally agreed by the members of the staff that few freshman students understand the function of the semicolon. Many of them never attempt to use the mark; or if they do attempt, show a complete ignorance of its service. . . .

"III. *Sentence structure.* The two most serious faults are, as always, the incomplete sentence and the "comma fault," or the separation of two independent elements merely by a comma. . . .

"IV. *Grammatical terminology.* Whereas the tendency of the day is more and more away from any insistence upon a universal vocabulary of grammatical terms, we find it necessary to presuppose a knowledge of at least such terms as will suggest the logical relationship between the parts of a sentence."

Why do college instructors, one may ask, so gravely frown upon the comma fault? A little dot over the comma will fix things all right. Are we sending our sons and daughters to college to have them so trained that they will never disgrace their parents by placing a comma where a semicolon ought to be? Yes, one may ask such questions; and let us take him seriously. We must bear in mind that he represents a considerable number who look upon punctua-

tion as a sort of garnishment that one sprinkles over his composition to make it look more appetizing. When he sees such stress placed upon a comma, his amazement is somewhat akin to that of the eager volunteer in the World War who, when told that he was disqualified on account of his teeth, exclaimed, "But what has that to do with it? I'm going to shoot the Germans, not bite them!" A teacher, like a doctor, becomes a diagnostician. The latter sees in bad teeth the signs of constitutional weakness; the former sees in certain misuses of the comma and period a deplorable ignorance of what constitutes a sentence, an ignorance of the very unit of composition, an ignorance which puts the pupil on a par with a mason who cannot distinguish a whole brick from a fragment.

All of the specific weaknesses mentioned in the passages quoted are symptoms of a disease which is widespread. One can know the season when colds are prevalent by merely watching the billboards on which patent medicines are emblazoned. One needs but a slight acquaintance with recent composition textbooks and exercise pads to know that the ailment complained of by the Smith College staff is not a local malady, but a national epidemic. It is no longer confined to schools and colleges, but has affected the current literature of the country.

What is the nature of the malady? What is the cure?

The malady is ignorance of the structural elements that make a sentence and of the thought relation that one element bears to



another. Its most prominent manifestations are the amputated clause or phrase and the run-on sentence, or so-called "comma fault"; but it can be recognized in numerous other forms. It lies at the bottom of many composition blunders, including all that come under faulty coördination and subordination, incoherence through faulty syntax, misplaced and dangling modifiers, and practically all errors in punctuation. It is the cause also of much trouble in interpretation.

To learn what attack is being made upon the evil, I have examined fourteen different composition textbooks taken at random from my shelves. I find that in thirteen of them the study of the sentence begins with a definition. Here is the list:

1. A sentence is a group of words expressing a thought.
2. A sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought.
3. A sentence is a group of words used as a statement, a question, a command, or an entreaty.
4. The sentence consists of a number of words in such a relation to one another that they convey a complete thought.
5. A sentence is a group of words expressing a complete thought. A *complete sentence* names a person or thing and also tells something about this person or thing.
6. The same as No. 3.
7. The same as No. 2.
8. The same as No. 1.
9. A sentence is the expression in words of a complete thought—whether a statement, command, question, or exclamation.
10. The same as No. 2.
11. The same as No. 2.
12. A sentence is a group of words expressing a single complete thought.
13. The same as No. 2.

I shall not pause to question the accuracy of the definitions. Of the thirteen authors eleven define a sentence in terms of a thought or of a complete thought, and the other two define it in terms of a statement, question, command, or entreaty. In all cases the new term introduced is more

abstract, more indefinite, more difficult to understand than the term it is intended to elucidate. All of the authors accompany their definitions with from one to five illustrative sentences, of which the following is a typical group:

Yellow roses cover the wall.  
They have gone to the camp.  
Mountains are very imposing.

Eight of the authors proceed immediately to an exercise consisting of a column of word groups of which some are sentences and some are not. The pupil, by applying the definition he has learned, is expected to determine whether each group of words does or does not constitute a sentence. This type of exercise is not confined to elementary books, but is found in texts intended for use in high schools. Following are the first three word groups in each of the eight books:

1

Ink three feet a quart of new cloth  
Beautiful sing in the clouds grow  
One shot scattered the noisy flock

2

Pulled out their maps  
The parents were anxious  
Things had been happening

3

He entered the room as she left  
When he came to the end of the bridge  
Standing with his bag in his hand

4

Winds blow west  
The wind blowing  
Making a great effort

5

The cars were driven rapidly  
The rapidly driven car  
In early spring

6

Growing by the roadside  
In the corner near the window  
The north wind is very cold

7

A soft answer turneth away wrath  
Gibraltar rock stands firm  
The child being honest and giving up the money

8

Looked in the mirror  
We saw the elephant  
Was late to school

I doubt that there is such a thing as the so-called "sentence sense"; but if there is, will these exercises develop it? A pupil who performs such tasks with one hundred per cent efficiency will, in his composition work, write as follows: *He took the little black kitten. Which belonged to me.* Can a pupil having no knowledge of the function of modifiers and relying solely upon "sentence sense," upon the complete-thought conception—a pupil, mind you, to whom *this* and *which* are not pronouns but mere words, abstract symbols, bringing no concrete image to the mind—can such a pupil be expected to understand that he may call *This belonged to me* a sentence, but that he may not call *Which belonged to me* a sentence unless he places an interrogation point after it? The combined exercises in the eight books examined total 166 word groups, and only one of these groups begins with a relative pronoun. Such seems to be the popular remedy for the amputated clause.

In regard to the "comma fault," the usual attack is of precisely the same nature: (1) a definition of the run-on sentence; (2) a sample of the error accompanied with a correction of it; (3) an exercise in which the pupil is to correct the comma faults. In one of the fourteen books examined, the author meets the issue squarely, attempts no hurdles, and postpones all attack on the "comma fault" till he has taken his reader through a long and rather intensive study of technical grammar. But in most localities today a grammar school is a place where no grammar is taught, and a high school is a place where grammar is sometimes briefly reviewed. Many pupils find themselves briefly re-viewing a subject which they have never viewed. There is not room in the overcrowded high-school

English courses for an exhaustive study of technical grammar. Is there no other solution?

I think there is another solution. It is the substitution of an ounce of prevention for the pound of cure. To prevent an ailment, we must know the source from which it springs. I believe the origin of the weaknesses complained of by the Smith College staff lies in the improper approach (or no approach) to sentence study in the junior-high-school years. I purposely avoid the word *grammar* not because I fear to wave the red flag but because the term conveys an idea quite different from what I have in mind. Two distinct kinds of sentence study should be pursued throughout the junior and senior high schools: one should be analytic, the other synthetic; one should be treated as a science, the other as an art. The two should be collateral, but I must confine the discussion at present to sentence analysis in the junior high school.

I believe this study should begin directly with the scientific examination of a large and carefully graded collection of specimen sentences; that the method should be as far as possible inductive rather than deductive, proceeding not, as in the thirteen texts examined, from definition to type but from type to definition; that the specimen sentences should be so arranged that the more difficult constructions will not be encountered until the easier ones have been mastered; and that a full understanding of the large elements in all types of sentences should precede any attempt at minute analysis.

But in teaching sentence structure inductively it is necessary to remember certain psychological principles. Communication through language resolves itself into two processes: the translation of concrete images into abstract word images, and the retranslation of abstract word images into concrete images. The first process is composition; the second is interpretation. To

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get the full benefit of an abstract word image it is necessary to get back of the symbol to the thing symbolized. It is a well-known fact that the young mind, as well as the more mature but underdeveloped mind, can deal successfully with the concrete, but not with the abstract. When we place before a child such a sentence as *Sweet are the uses of adversity*, we are compelling him to deal with symbols, for no concrete image is aroused in his mind. We must see to it therefore that in the sentences presented for analysis abstractions are avoided. Each sentence should be such as will bring to the pupil's mind a concrete image easily within his reach. Furthermore, since technical terms are abstractions of the most troublesome kind, the nomenclature employed should be reduced to a minimum and should be confined to terms that denote functional relations, not formal differences.

Such a collection of sentences, printed in pamphlet form, is now being used in the West Hartford junior high schools. Only the specimen sentences are placed in the hands of the pupils. Although several pages of the syllabus are devoted to an explanation of the general purpose of the sentences, and to suggested methods of presenting them, the choice of exercises is left to the discretion and ingenuity of the teachers. The sentences are arranged in groups of ten, groups I, IA, etc., being parallel, and groups I, II, etc., being progressive.

Since no formal text accompanies the specimen sentences, I cannot do more than indicate the general character of the presentation, which each teacher makes in her own manner and in her own words. The general nature of the preliminary orientation is somewhat as follows, but much more informal:

When I write upon the blackboard the single word *house*, some sort of mental picture or image arises at once in the mind of each person who is watching attentively. In no two minds does

exactly the same image appear. One pupil sees a country homestead, where another sees a brick apartment house. Nor is the image clear or lasting, for it is not possible to make a good mental picture with only one word. What I write is a crooked chalk line intended to bring to your mind an image similar to the one that is in my mind as I make the line. There are, then, two things to consider in dealing with a word—its form and its meaning. The form of the word has to do with that crooked line, or with the letters on a printed page; the meaning of the word is the image that it brings up in the mind. More important than anything else in your study of English is the ability to get back of mere words to the ideas behind them.

This distinction between form and meaning is one of the things that make the study of grammar seem difficult. That part of grammar which deals with form is to many pupils dry and uninteresting; but the part that deals with meanings is not. The study of sentence structure is one of meanings rather than of forms.

One way to study grammar is to memorize definitions and rules, and then try to apply them; another way is to gather specimen sentences of various kinds, take them apart, and discover the relations existing among the parts. The latter way is the one we shall follow.

The work begins in the seventh grade. Only the broadest terms are used at first, the more specific being introduced gradually as the pupil progresses in the course. The term modifier, for example, is used for adjectives, adverbs, adjective phrases, adjective clauses, adverbial phrases, and adverbial clauses. I cannot take space here to explain in full how sentence structure is taught inductively, but perhaps a discussion of the first group of sentences with a few suggested exercises may indicate the character of the study. In this group every element in each sentence is but a single word, all verbs are intransitive, and pronouns and abstract nouns are avoided.

#### Group I

1. Tom's dog barked. 2. Little children soon arrived. 3. The young girls talked continuously. 4. The poor wounded horse still breathed. 5. The bright rosy glow gradually faded away. 6. Fortunately the big bear ran away. 7. The narrow winding path ended here abruptly. 8. The dog's long bushy tail always hung down. 9. Eager,



enthusiastic, joyful, the great crowd cheered continuously. 10. Rising, falling, whirling, dancing, the bright autumn leaves rushed wildly by.

#### Exercise 1

Omit the first word of the first sentence, and you will have left *dog barked*. Is the sentence as good as it was? Is it still a statement? Omit the second word, and you have *Tom's barked*. This, you will see, makes no sense at all. Omit the third word, and you have *Tom's dog*. The statement is gone. Only one of the three words, then, may be left out without destroying the sentence. If you experiment in the same way you will find that in each of the ten sentences two words are necessary, and all the others may be left out without completely destroying the statement. Make a list of the ten sentences after you have omitted from each all but the two necessary words.

#### Exercise 2

After the list that you made in doing exercise 1 has been reviewed for errors, examine it carefully. The first pair of words is *dog* and *ran*. Which of the two can be thought of better without the other? Can you think of the meaning of *ran* without thinking of something that can run? Does the word *dog*, taken by itself, bring to your mind some sort of picture? Does the word *ran*, considered separately, bring any picture to your mind? Look over all the words on your list, and draw a line under each one which, taken all by itself, brings to your mind the image of some thing. If you have done the task correctly, you will have underlined one word in each of the ten pairs. Such words are called *nouns*.

#### Exercise 3

Keeping before you the list made in doing exercises 1 and 2, examine carefully the word not underlined in each pair. Does this word tell us something about the thing named? Does it tell us what that thing has done? This word is a *verb*. If you and I should talk about automobiles, then automobiles would be the subject of our conversation. In the same sense, if *ran*, in sentence No. 1, tells us something about *dog*, then *dog* is the subject about which we are being informed. Therefore in each of the ten sentences in Group 1 two words only are necessary—a noun and a verb; and the noun is the *subject* of the verb.

#### Exercise 4

Keeping before you the list made in doing exercise 1 put back mentally one by one, the words that have been stricken out. As each word is replaced, observe that its meaning bears directly either upon the verb or upon its subject. If you apply each word replaced first to the subject and then to the verb, you will find little difficulty in deciding to which one it belongs. For instance, in No. 1, does the word *Tom's* belong to *dog* or to

*ran*? In No. 2 does *soon* belong to *children* or to *arrived*? In No. 3 does *continuously* belong to *girls* or to *talked*? In the sentence *The horse breathed* the word *horse* may apply to any one member of the huge family of horses. In the sentence *The wounded horse breathed* does the word *horse* apply to as many members of the family as it did before the word *wounded* was introduced? If not, the word *wounded* changes the meaning of the word *horse*. *Modify* is an ordinary word meaning to vary or change. We are therefore using it in its ordinary sense when we say that in No. 4 the word *wounded* modifies the word *horse*. In the same sentence *still* is a modifier of the verb *breathed*. All of the unnecessary words in this group will thus be found to be modifiers. What does each one modify? In writing your answers, underline every word that is taken from the sentence, as in the following model: In No. 4 *The* modifies *horse*; *poor* modifies *horse*; *wounded* modifies *horse*; *still* modifies *breathed*.

#### Exercise 5

In sentence No. 5 we found the two necessary words to be *glow* and *faded*. Now we divide the complete sentence into two parts, the first containing the noun and all its modifiers, and the second containing the verb and all its modifiers. The first part is *The bright rosy glow*. It does more than name a thing; it gives us a rather clear picture. The second part is *gradually faded away*; it tells us just how the subject acted. The first part of the sentence is called the *complete subject*, and the second part is called the *complete predicate*. Find the complete subject and the complete predicate in each of the nine remaining sentences in this group.

#### Summary of Facts Learned from Examining Group 1

1. Every sentence in the group contains two necessary words and a varying number of words which are valuable but not necessary.
2. The first of the necessary words is a noun; it names some thing.
3. The second of the necessary words is a verb; it tells what the thing named has done.
4. The noun is the subject of the verb.
5. Each of the other words modifies either the noun or the verb.
6. Modifiers may be omitted from the sentence one at a time.
7. Each sentence may be divided into two distinct parts, the complete subject and the complete predicate.
8. The noun and all its modifiers make the complete subject.
9. The verb and all its modifiers make the complete predicate.

These facts of course are not represented as applying to all sentences; they are merely found to be common to this particu-

lar group. No adequate conception of what constitutes a sentence can be formed until the succeeding groups have been examined.

## ENGLISH EXPRESSION THROUGH THE SCHOOL PAPER

MARY J. J. WRINN

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Miss Wrinn is teacher of English in the George Washington High School of New York City. She has for some time been in charge of special classes in journalism and poetry. She is author of the well-known book Elements of Journalism which has recently appeared. In this article as well as in her book on Elements of Journalism she has set forth a procedure by which a school paper may be identified with the real life of the community.*

L. W. R.

When Anna Hempstead Branch addressed the Modern Literature Club last December, Georgia Cooper was asked to cover the event. The next day she placed her typewritten article in the copy basket and made a hasty exit from the publication office to her first-period class.

During the second period the report was read aloud before the journalism class. It was pronounced interesting, excellent in selection of details, and well organized. An experience of a couple of hours had been compressed into a column and a quarter. Two questions arose: (1) What did Miss Branch look like? (2) Did she read only two poems? Some awkward passages were pointed out as well as a sequence which affected the truth of the report. The next day Georgia was absent. The feature editor undertook to sift in the corrections. The editor then prepared two inserts and an A head. With fifty other articles, which had undergone like treatment, it was dispatched to the printer.

A few days later, a column of cold type on the front page of the paper, it became the subject of class discussion. Some mistakes shrieked from the column. Print has a way of emphasizing errors. Correction at once became an individual and a joint activity until the work satisfied. Here it stands, the rapid-fire product of a fifteen-year-old girl:

"With words, a world of unexpected and exquisite adventure is opened up to us," declared Miss Anna Hempstead Branch, noted poetess, in her address to the guests of the Modern Literature Club, Thursday, December 19, in the Little Theatre.

When the tall, stately woman, gowned entirely in black, faced her audience, an instant hush fell upon the room. She began her reading in a soft, well-modulated voice which compelled the interest of the listeners from the beginning to the end of the meeting.

"You know, poets have their own adventures writing poems in their homes and experimenting with rhythms, rhymes, and thoughts," she continued.

As an impressive confirmation of her statement, Miss Branch read a few of her poems. Before reading some of them, she explained how she had happened to write them.

### Longed to See New York

About the *Monk in the Kitchen*, the poetess related that she had lived in New England all of her life, but had always wanted to be "up and doing, and off and away." Unfortunately, she did not have any money. She had always heard a fairy-godmother's voice within her say, "If you want to get out, you must go further in!" However, she never grasped its meaning, until one day, when she was all alone in her small room. Looking around for some way to get "further in," she decided that the only practical way was to begin by cleaning her room. While she was working, the poem sang itself into her mind.

"Incidentally," the speaker smilingly remarked, "it *did* result in a way of getting out. I submitted the poem to the *Atlantic Monthly* for publication. It was accepted, and the money I received was sufficient to enable me to come down to New York."

## Reads Several Poems

Miss Branch also read *Connecticut Towns*, *Song for the Jehovan Eagle*, *When I Danced With the Great King of Spain*, *My Mother's Words*, *To a New York Shop Girl*, and *To a Coin* from her last book *Sonnets from a Lock Box*. *My Mother's Words* seemed to be a favorite among the club members.

Later, in the library at tea she yielded to the request of her friend, Mr. John L. Foley, and read *In the Beginning Was the Word*. Before the reading she recalled an amusing incident of her childhood. Miss Branch had been brought up to reverence the teachings of the Bible. She was tempted to take a bite out of a forbidden sugar egg on the mantle-piece; but to relieve her conscience she first removed the Bible to another room.

Miss Branch is the president of the Poets' Guild of America, and has done a considerable amount of work in connection with the Guild, in the Christodora Community House, at 147 Avenue B. Her purpose (and dream) in sponsoring the organization, is to spread the word "fitly spoken." She hopes, some day, to hold an enormous meeting, from which the beautiful words may be sent around the country by wireless.

(Here article broke over)

She is an extreme sympathizer with younger poets. As a word of advice she said, "No one of us is really powerful until we limit ourselves. When we want to become active in the outside world," she went on, "we can't just sit in a room and think vast thoughts. In fact, in history," she explained, "we find the really great men accepting the greatest number of limitations."

Speaking, later, about the new movements in poetry, Miss Branch pointed out that so many people are writing poetry, at present, that one became conscious of the "whole composite chorus."

"New poetry has really never been found, but if this new group develops, it may be the new poetry. The one idea is taken by many people, and some answer each other back and forth, others catch the note and amplify it or enrich it. It is, in a word, an antiphonal chorus," she concluded.

It is unnecessary to enlarge on the educational value of the various activities in this one exercise.

When the school paper is an educational project, it offers a motive and a challenge. From the student's quest for news to the criticism of his own work on the printed page, he is dealing with a real problem. His article has its special significance for him as a unit of his creation; its special

significance for him as a part of a joint activity, for which there is a general need. Every other article has significance for him as a part of this joint activity. Every contributor has something in common with him; to a certain extent so has every reader of his paper.

Nothing will develop the habit of self-criticism as will a survey of individual work in relation to a whole. And when complacency gives way to self-evaluation there is bound to be growth. With papers spread before them, members of the group focus on the leads across the front page for variety of grammatical beginnings. There is a participle, a phrase, a conditional clause, a noun beginning. Good! Next, they test the heads. Each in itself fulfills requirements; some are even meritorious. In relation, however, they are monotonous. Every one begins with a noun and except in one instance the noun is followed by a verb. We might have used an infinitive beginning, a noun followed by an infinitive, a participle, or a verb with the subject appearing in the deck directly below.

Some one ventures again, "Heads are so hard to write!" You know perfectly well that to condense the story of a column into three lines of thirteen or fourteen letters, including spaces between words, is a rigid test of ingenuity! But what a stimulus to determination, to desire for general culture—the well-informed students make the best copy readers!—to the mastery of a vocabulary.

Next day news breaks. The Rehearsal Club is going to present *Medea*. Let's feature it with illustrations, some one suggests. The drawings lead to a discussion of the play; to Jason, Greek myths, gods and goddesses. Then Euripides suggests Sophocles and Sophocles calls up Aeschylus. The "city room" has turned classic quite naturally and there has been a socialized recitation. The discussion reaches beyond the city room. The feature editor,



who has considerable intellectual curiosity finds a library book on the Greek drama. That leads her to *The Winged Horse!*

From such experiences English expression develops as naturally as the bud in the spring sunlight. Not infrequently, however, the teacher must create situations to turn into copy moments that would otherwise vanish unrecorded. She must call attention to construction operations in the neighboring lot, to the coming of the Japanese delegation, to the new copper beech on the grounds.

She may even have to appear dogmatic. But the intimacy between teacher and journalism class gives the teacher the privilege of being high-handed on occasion. Some terms ago the senior class presented six oak trees as a parting gift to the school. The editors counted on a tree poem from the president of the Poetry Club, who was on the staff. Her muse had apparently been unresponsive. At three o'clock Friday, copy was to go to press; at 8:30 a. m. there was no poem.

"Come here," I said, leading the way to a window overlooking the grounds. It was raining . . . "Now you go back to your official room"—it was the day of the long official—"and bring me *something* at the end of the period." Here it is:

To a Campus Oak

Very young and lovely, she  
Unfurls green banners to the rain. . .  
Thrill not so madly, little tree—  
Spring will come again!

Not only strict journalistic forms: news and feature stories with their variations, but even literary expression may be stimulated by the newspaper column. The editorial page offers a place for the essay—the editorial is a timely essay,—humor, poetry, the short story, reviews of all kinds. It is so much more exciting to review a book for your paper than to write a book report! As a stimulant to an abiding interest in verse the poetry column is unparalleled.

Print will show the young versifier defects and challenge perfection. His work will help to cultivate appreciative readers. "Great poets need great audiences, too," says Walt Whitman.

Oral and written expression, incidental to the project, is no less vital. *The Weekly Register* of Omaha invites us to exchange papers. Our exchange editor tries to make his reply accurate, friendly, simple, beautiful to look at. Even a six-line letter may be a thing of beauty. An advertising firm has sent a cut for use in our paper. We do not advertise. The business manager must return the cut. He prepares a letter to accompany it. A few marked copies for a guest speaker will be accompanied by a gracious note.

Then there is telephoning. Has the engraver sent the cut of Bill Jones's cartoon to the printer? Again, the printer has asked the editor to telephone his correction of page proofs to save time. The editor at the telephone will spread a marked page proof before him. The printer at the other end will hold a duplicate. He will follow directions. The editor must therefore organize carefully what he has to say; he must be brief and direct; he must enunciate clearly.

The very nature of a paper is assurance of unlimited opportunity for all-round development. Perhaps English expression of any size must grow out of understanding—of events; of possibilities and limitations; of human nature.

Tact in social relationships is encouraged if not compelled by the act of news gathering. And surely tact is akin to taste, if not to grace, in writing. When the journalist undertakes to interview Mr. X. Y. Z. of the Latin department, who has just returned from a trip around the world, he must give heed to his manner. "You learn how to handle the different members of the faculty," is the way one student put it.

Through these contacts with many dif-

ferent temperaments knowledge comes; perhaps wisdom lingers. The young journalist soon recognizes the largeness, the fineness, the humanness of some; the inflexibility, the egotism, the unreasonableness of others. The press is mightier than the sword though it be the undeveloped press

of the high-school community. It affords many varied experiences that the youngsters need for natural development and it sends them out to those experiences with a song in their hearts. Whatever does this is a force that should not be overlooked in our schools.

## STABLE FACTORS IN THE PREPARATION OF TEACHERS OF LITERATURE IN A TEACHER-TRAINING INSTITUTION

BLANCHE F. EMERY

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Miss Emery is professor of English in the special field of children's literature in the Michigan State Normal College, Ypsilanti, Michigan. She has also been identified with similar work both in West Virginia and Missouri. In this article she gives us a very practical program for making "book contacts" in both the field of teacher training and student life.*

L. W. R.

In discussing the stable factors in the preparation of a teacher of literature for children, it is not possible to give conclusions with scientific accuracy. Many statements must yet be made empirically merely as the result of classroom practices and procedures. There seem to be, however, certain dependable factors which can be selected as common to every class of preparing teachers in a teacher-preparing institution. The conditions can be examined both negatively and positively—both as to what is not to be expected and what can be expected.

It is conceded that a classroom is not a place to "quibble" over lack of accomplishments, but rather a place in which a given group is to advance within a given time in habits, skills, or informations. With this idea in mind it seems well to attempt to find the level of a given class when it enters upon the study of children's literature.

At least three of the possible points of book contacts for boys and girls being home, school, and the libraries, an attempt was made to discover in a class in Ypsilanti how much contact students had had with the subject matter at the beginning of the term.

Nine students of the twenty-nine stu-

dents had had some contacts with children's books in their homes, only one having a library of worth-while numbers. Only one had had any contact with poetry in her childhood home. Five had no libraries in their public schools, eight stated their libraries were "good" or better. One had been "discouraged" about handling books

	Good con- tact	Fair con- tact	Poor con- tact	No con- tact
Children's books in home	1	4	7	17
Children's poetry in home	1	0	0	28
School libraries.....	8	4	12	5
Public libraries.....	9	4	5	11

It is evident that the habit of using "public agencies" had in all cases not been inculcated for some of the students who stated they had had no contact with public libraries came from cities well equipped with children's libraries.

There is no attempt in this paper to get at causes; there is simply the attempt to find conditions as they seem to exist in a teachers' college with a possible analysis that would dictate wherein emphasis should be placed in order best to equip a young teacher to direct the reading of children from grades one to ten.

These students were given a book list of five hundred books suitable for reading in these grades. A total of 923 books had been read before entering the class, the fewest read by any one girl being one, the most read being fifty-nine; but one third of the girls had read one half of the 923 books. Approximately one third of the girls considered themselves readers.

It is obvious that one needs to accept a class as "virgin" in the field of children's books with full realization that students possess no clear information as to background of children's literature. They do not know what "Aesop" is, whether there was a Mother Goose, whether she is American or English or French, what "realistic" literature is, why the most sold animal stories are such poor stuff for children, what an illustration for a child's book must be—the whole groundwork of facts must be given, along with wide experience in reading in the field of children's books.

The first stable factor, then, amply supported by the data on children's reading given in Gray and Monroe *The Reading Interests and Habits of Adults* is negative, but positive when accepted upon its face value by those who prepare young teachers to handle books—that of laying the full groundwork of acquaintance with the children's book field. For this work a single term of twelve weeks or the equivalent is given.

If the essential factors are kept in mind, it yet seems fairly possible to send students into the field equipped to meet the general problem of directed reading, and even equipped to understand some special reading problems.

#### THE TEACHER

A faculty member who prepares the student for handling children's books must have a highly developed literary sense with a keen appreciation for reading; she must know the trend of modern education and

preferably she should have been a teacher of children herself; she must have the specialized information about children's authors, children's interests, children's illustrators. The field is literary, scientifically educational, specialized in its information; the teacher to succeed must too be literary, scientific, and specialized.

#### THE EQUIPMENT

Obviously it is impossible to have students make contacts with books when the equipment of books is too small for such contacts. It is to be regretted that, in this country, courses are now being offered and credit being given in colleges and in an occasional university when no contacts with books are given to the student except with such collections as Curry and Clippinger, *Children's Literature*,<sup>1</sup> a book designed for college classes only.

It is difficult to say just how many books a children's library must have in order to be a children's library; certainly there is need for very careful selection of good editions, with sufficient variety of types and range in age interests to give a vision to the young teacher of the possibilities of developing for every child a distinct reading interest. Anything less than a distinct reading interest for every child is not a worth-while ideal in our public school. The list in Michigan from which books must be purchased with school funds contains approximately 2800 books.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Gray has stressed in his discussion of reading habits the factor of accessibility of books.<sup>3</sup> How intrenched have the monthly book clubs become through making books very accessible to the reading public. Children's books should be made as easily accessible as possible to the college student just as they are to the children—open

<sup>1</sup> Curry and Clippinger, *Children's Literature* (Rand McNally and Company).

<sup>2</sup> *Preferred List of Books* (1925) published by the Superintendent of Instruction, Lansing, Michigan.

<sup>3</sup> Gray and Monroe, *The Reading Interests and Habits of Adults* (The Macmillan Company).



shelves, easy browsing facilities, clear shelf arrangement, a room as much like the children's rooms as possible. Students cannot touch, taste, handle, assimilate the quantities of materials, unless the way is made easy for them to read and examine books.

#### THE COURSE

The course in children's books seems to be a rather independent unit in a student's curriculum, as well as one of the heaviest courses in quantities of material to be absorbed in a twelve weeks' period. Few courses in high school or college bear enough subject matter to be of much assistance to the student. A course in poetry helps so far as appreciation is concerned; it is of little assistance in acquaintance with subject matter. A course in mythology helps in the unit of myths; Latin helps in the study of one group of epic heroes. Since the material is so all inclusive, it seems to be the college teacher's task to assume the entire responsibility for the subject matter of the course.

Teachers need to be prepared rather generally in the field of children's books. The uncertainty of teacher placement today does not permit of a teacher's refusing a position because it is of a grade level for which she feels poorly prepared. She dare not be too discriminating. Such a condition means a general preparation in the field of children's books and children's book interests. It means a course with *shifting of emphasis* for different grades, not *rejection* of materials.

To be effective a course must introduce a student

1. to the scientific data published by Gray,<sup>2</sup> Uhl,<sup>4</sup> Terman,<sup>5</sup> and others upon the reading habits and tastes of children and adults;

2. to the illustrators who work in the field of children's books;

3. to the technique of good story form for younger and for older children;

4. to the public agencies—school, city, State libraries, bookstores as needed in life situations;

5. to the creative movement, with attention to child writers and illustrators;

6. to techniques in teaching—reading poetry, introducing books, dramatizing;

7. to the different types of subject matter

a) *traditional* fairy tales, myths, fables, epics, romances, rhymes, ballads,

b) *modern fantastic* tales, poems,

c) *realistic* stories, adventure, animal, etc.

Lack of interest in classes is often accounted for by the students' inability to see wherein the subject matter functions in life situations. A course in children's literature becomes one of the most tangible of courses to the young student because she sees that her card catalogue, her collection of illustrations, her self-compiled anthology are ready to use in whatever teaching position she holds. It is not difficult for her to see, too, that "at homeness" in children's books will function when she leaves the teaching profession for home duties.

The tangibility of subject matter, then, together with the inspiration that comes with expansion of interests in the world of art, makes interest such a big factor that "read as much as you can" is the most satisfactory quantitative measurement for such course.

So far as the student is concerned, then, an experiential background (both at home and at school) detached from the subject matter of the course is the usual equipment

<sup>2</sup> Uhl, *The Materials of Reading* (Silver Burdett and Company).

<sup>5</sup> Terman and Lima, *Children's Reading* (D. Appleton and Company).

of the young student upon entrance to the class in children's literature. There is needed

1. a very complete equipment of well-selected children's books;
2. accessibility of these books so that great quantities of good books can be examined by the students within a twelve weeks' period;
3. a faculty member who is literary in interest, scientific in her thinking and in-

formed in the special fields of art and literature for children;

4. a course that is broad in its subject matter, educational in its diagnosis of reading habits and tastes and literary in the treatment of subject matter.

With the added factor of an easily aroused interest in the subject matter, there is little difficulty in getting students to become participators in a world of new experiences in children's books.

## THE OUTLINE AS A FACTOR IN ORAL EXPRESSION

EMILY M. RICHIE

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Miss Richie is a teacher of English in Memorial Junior High School, San Diego, California. In a most vivid way Miss Richie has shown in this article how the outline may be intelligently used as a piece of technique in the organization of thought.*

L. W. R.

In oral expression classes few children arrange and present their material in a logical way until they have received instruction that makes them conscious of the necessity of first thinking out a reasonable plan of arrangement. It is desirable to use devices in the classroom which will make each child realize that organization of his material is a definite step in its most effective presentation.

One might suppose that the outlines in their textbooks, together with supplementary texts, would be sufficient for this purpose, but it is the experience of teachers that it is not. Often bright and interested children slavishly follow a textbook outline which does not apply to their material. This proves that they have not grasped the function of the outline, and are not able to carry its meaning into their individual problems.

An illustration will show what is meant. The textbook outline concerned making and doing things which were of interest to them, and three entirely sufficient topics were used: materials, process, results. An eighth-grade boy had collected excellent in-

formation about the Community Chest from his parents and friends. He was struggling to force this material into the topics given in the outline in the textbook. His lack of success confused and discouraged him.

At this point devices were used which helped every member of the class to see that different methods of organization must be used for different kinds of material.

Before the class period a list of ten articles was written out on paper. The list was made, of course, with a definite principle of selection. The class was told that it was to be given a test to see whether it could remember ten articles after hearing them named but once. The list was given in this manner: "Suppose your mother sends you to town on Saturday morning and asks you to get the following articles: (1) a box of laundry starch; (2) one spool each of black, brown, and tan darning cotton; (3) a cord for the flatiron; (4) a bottle of Clorox; (5) a card of white tape; (6) a box of soap chips; (7) a package of needles of different sizes; (8) a package of ball bluing; (9) six clips to fasten the cloth on the ironing board; (10) three

yards of white outing flannel for padding the cloth on the ironing board. How many of these things could you bring home?"

One boy remembered five of the articles, and gave them in the same order in which they had been read. A girl remembered six, and gave the first four on the list and the last two. Another girl volunteered and gave her list as follows: "A box of soap chips, a bottle of Clorox, a package of ball bluing, a box of laundry starch, a cord for the flatiron, three yards of white outing flannel for padding the iron board, a package of needles of different sizes, a card of white tape." She counted them off slowly on her fingers, and at the end said: "I've forgotten something about the ironing board and something about the mending."

Then the complete list was written on the board and headings written in according to suggestions from pupils. The completed outline stood with the main heads: (1) things to wash with; (2) things to use in ironing; (3) things to mend with. They saw how much easier it was to remember a list if the articles were grouped.

One boy who suggested that he'd write out the list and take it to town with him was told that his point was well taken, but that this method was used to show them that the best way to remember any list was by putting the parts which made the list into some order for which they saw some reason.

They were asked if there was any other way of arranging the articles on the list, and one boy suggested that they might be grouped according to the store where they would be purchased. The heads, showing local influence, were written on the blackboard: (1) Whitney's store; (2) Piggly Wiggly store; (3) Woolworth's store.

Before another list was given them, each student was provided with paper and told that he could write as many articles as he could remember after the entire list had been read once. The second list was designed to appeal to boys, and named articles

used in making a radio, in repairing a car, and in keeping up a yard. The class performance was very good, and all but a few students attempted to arrange the articles in groups.

Two students were able to remember the list of ten articles, three remembered nine articles, four remembered eight articles, and many remembered seven articles. One child who had not grasped the idea of classification had, nevertheless, remembered eight articles.

Then they were asked to think of words to tell what they had done with the list of articles. After some discussion the following were suggested: sorted, arranged, grouped, and classified. These words were written on the board for future use.

They asked to be allowed to make lists of their own to read to the class. Several good ones were given. One concerned the ingredients of a spice cake and its frosting, one the parts of the engine, the transmission, and the body of an automobile, another the instruments of the school orchestra. Their own knowledge and interest prompted their selection.

At this point they were asked to look at the table of contents in their social-science textbooks. They found that this book was arranged "the way the things happened." Their oral expression textbooks were examined. They could find no system in its order, and were even skeptical of their teacher's suggestion that it was arranged in the order of the easy parts to the difficult parts. They were asked to take their teacher's statement on faith.

They were asked to suppose that they were trying to persuade their fathers and mothers to let them go to a summer camp. "Would you give your reasons this way? 'It would be good for my health to go. It does not cost very much. I'd have a lot of fun. The camp is in a pretty location. They sing songs every night. They let you

take  
laugh  
better  
be.  
last,  
cost  
be go  
a lot  
gum  
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T



take a bow and arrow with you.' " They laughed, meaning by this that they were better pleaders than such a person would be. Asked what reason they would give last, then, the majority shouted, "It doesn't cost very much." A few said, "It would be good for my health to go," or, "I'd have a lot of fun." Others felt that no such argument would be complete without "All the other boys are going," or, "Miss So-and-so is going to be with us all the time." Experience had taught them to group their arguments in the order of their importance, reserving the strongest to the last.

Now was the time to summarize the different methods of classification. On the board was written, "One can sort, arrange, group, or classify in the following ways." On another board was written, "Articles to be bought: parts of an automobile; things to use in making a cake; instruments in an orchestra; the contents of a book on oral expression; the contents of a book on social science; arguments for going to a summer camp." Then they were asked to tell how we had arranged the articles to be purchased. The word, "kinds" was agreed upon. "But we also said they could be arranged by stores where they could be bought." For that arrangement, "place" was suggested. In the same way others were written: "part of something bigger than it is," "time of happening," "easy to harder," "less important to more important." The complete classification was somewhat awkward, but it was in the words of the students and as it had been written following discussion it was understood by them, as more graceful diction would not have been, had it been substituted. The outline was left on the board to be used as they worked on individual problems.

Any teacher will realize that the procedure here outlined is not the work of one class period. With one group six class periods were consumed in studying this out.

The interest of the students was main-

tained throughout the work, and every child had some part in it. Every child was allowed to contribute as much as he would. It is not to be expected that every child will grasp the logic of an outline at once. The brightest ones will understand it thoroughly, provided the subjects used are familiar to them. All of them will see that arrangement of material is as important a part of preparation for oral presentation as collection of material.

This work was done in oral expression classes for the purpose of helping students in working out talks to be given in the classroom or the school auditorium.

Several students were trying to prepare talks to be given before the entire school. They wanted to explain the work of the Junior Red Cross, in order to interest other students in joining. The sources from which they could obtain information were the teacher sponsor of the Junior Red Cross, the principal, the county secretary of the Red Cross, another teacher and her pupils who had corresponded with foreign children and sent a book of their own making to them to show them life in an American school, and the *Junior Red Cross News*. The material which they obtained was first presented in the oral expression class. Limits were then set to the subject each student was to present. One took the history of the Junior Red Cross, one the relief work done by the Junior Red Cross, one the possibilities of friendship with children of other nations, another a possible future if more children joined the organization. In each case a method of organization was chosen from those which had been worked out; time, place, or importance. The children felt that their talks were better than they could have made them otherwise, and consequently they had more confidence in their ability to present them.

Children are prone to memorize their talks. Such delivery cannot truly be called public speaking, but rather public reciting.

One girl said excitedly, immediately after her public appearance: "I wasn't a bit scared. I could see just the way the outline looked, and I talked all the way down it, and I didn't leave out a thing."

In English and social-science classes, oral reports on special topics are frequently assigned. The teachers of the subjects and the librarian feel that it is their responsibility to make sources of information available. They rightly feel that the work of the oral expression classes should aid students in the delivery of reports. The arrangement of material must be done by the

student, as it is obviously impossible for the teacher of English or social science to give a pre-class hearing to each child. The child has the material in his own mind and, unless the teacher listens to all he has to tell on the subject, she cannot give him definite advice.

Instruction in organization of material is the work of the teacher of oral expression. By showing children various methods of arrangement the teacher can make them "outline conscious," and provide them with a tool for use in constructing talks and reports.

## THE MAKING OF A SCHOOL PAPER

ALICE M. CONNORS

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Miss Connors is a teacher of English in the Ben Blewett Junior High School, St. Louis. She is also sponsor for the school paper, Junior Life, which is widely known among the junior high schools of our country. In this article she has given some of the details in the making of a live junior-high paper.*

L. W. R.

Although the writing of good English is not the chief motive for the publication of a junior-high-school paper, the very nature of such an activity makes the writing of some sort of English imperative. Moreover, the junior-high paper, being truly a school paper, for which every pupil is invited and encouraged to write, secures for itself a variety of contributions, in surprisingly generous quantities. This abundance of material necessitates a method of selection. Obviously, whatever this method of selection may be, one of its points in considering an article for publication must be the writer's manner of expressing what he has to say.

The first step in choosing what seems the best material may be made in the homerooms, where a reporter is elected to look after contributions to the school paper. The homeroom reporters (forty or more at Blewett) may take what they consider the best work of their respective groups to the

weekly meeting of the Reporters' Club. Here all copy must be classified and turned over to the staff. The staff, having been elected from the group of reporters because they are particularly "good in English," must work with the faculty sponsor in making the final selection for publication. This final selection, however, is not the last word on what appears in the paper. The reporters are given an opportunity to hear the school opinion on the wisdom, or lack of it, displayed in their choice of material. Time is provided for reading and discussing the paper in the homerooms, and for taking a vote on what the group considers the best article. Reporters take to the club meeting an account of the comments and criticisms on each issue. They tally the homeroom votes on the best article, and from the result prepare an announcement for the whole school on what the whole school considers the best article or articles.

So much for one phase of the social side

of the school paper. What bearing has this on the use of effective English? It must be that out of these homeroom and club discussions many a young writer gets the inspiration to make a conscious effort to express well what he has to say. He learns that news writing, editorial writing, feature writing, anecdotes, and jokes about things that go on in the school are in demand; and that good poems, original stories, and accounts of unusual personal experiences are rarely overlooked. One writer may be surprised to learn from the discussion that a few short but well-written news items about the school are preferred to his long and digressive account of an event in Canada or Brazil. Another may be disappointed that his good, long editorial on a world event is passed over, because a few short interesting discussions on school problems

or aspirations are considered more to the point. Others come to know that good stories are made so largely by the use of effective language. Those gifted with enough imagination for the writing of poetry may get the incentive to use something of originality and artistry in choosing the words to put their fancy into form.

Thus through interest, encouragement, and emulation much good writing is assured. A paper published by young writers for the edification and entertainment of young readers must have its columns open to contributors of many different degrees of ability. A very high standard of selection, superimposed by staff or faculty sponsor, is of no avail. The sponsor knows only too well that, in writing, "style comes late, if ever."

## THE ORGANIZATION OF THE SCHOOL NEWSPAPER

MARJORIE MACCREARY

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Miss MacCreary is teacher of news writing in the Thomas Jefferson Junior High School, Cleveland, Ohio. She has had much practical experience in newspaper and magazine work and has written many juvenile plays and educational articles for our leading educational magazines. Her paper The Jefferson Quill has been a news-writing pacemaker in the National Contest for three years. It won first place in city and State contests.*

"Sometime, we are going to have a school newspaper!" How often you have heard this, or thought it yourself, and yet never quite come to the actual organizing of a staff, securing a teacher, or planning the equipment.

Ten years ago there were few school papers but now every town has its collection of weeklies or monthlies which keep the parents and pupils informed of what is going on in the school. Educators have come to realize that the usefulness of such papers is great, not only as a classroom exercise in composition, but also as a means for keeping the community interested in the work of the school.

Which of these two purposes is more im-

portant has long been a matter of debate. From the educator's point of view, the publicity seems more important. If that is the angle to be emphasized, the paper should have a high per cent of general educational news, experiments in classroom teaching, honors conferred on the faculty members, and news of the Parent-Teacher Association.

As a classroom project, literary work of the classes should be published, contests for poetry or short stories, and personal items about the pupils. From a news writing standpoint, the editing should be done by the pupils with as much freedom as possible. The extreme of such freedom is a situation in which the teacher is only used as adviser



in case of dispute. While in the high-school and college newspaper this is possible, the younger the children are the more closely must they be supervised and helped.

A middle course between the two extremes gives a pupil-directed paper with news from both the students' and the educational interest. Cleveland, Ohio, has worked out the student publication on this basis.

What are the working conditions of the school papers? In organizing the new paper it is well to follow a standard which has brought good results.

The five requirements for an ideal paper were listed by the Cleveland Teachers of Journalism in 1927. With slight modifications in the various schools these are the five outstanding conditions which make the best possible organization.

1. A class chosen from the entire school according to ability, rather than a group working on it as an English classroom project.
2. At least one period assigned a day to the pupil for news writing work and instruction.
3. A teacher especially trained for newspaper work. She should have only two English classes besides her news writing work.
4. A separate room or office where the children can work during their free periods undisturbed.
5. At least a five-column paper published monthly.

While the senior high school usually publishes a weekly paper of seven or even eight columns, the youth and inexperience of the junior-high-school pupil usually balances this.

Why then have these five requirements been set down by a group of teachers who have been pioneers in establishing prize-winning school papers? These are not ideals alone, for they represent the actual working conditions in the schools in Cleve-

land. Special provisions are made at the Board of Education for giving these working conditions the possibility of securing the best product.

The first requirement, a class chosen from the entire school, gives the paper a representative group. If one class were selected for such a project, the paper would be of interest to only the class which produced it. These pupils would be the only ones to buy it, read it, and show it to their friends as a class project. Financially, it would be impossible to pay a printer's bill of over one hundred dollars for so small a group. A small mimeographed newspaper can be run off if the teacher wishes to have a newspaper project. Or, for the group which is interested in poetry, a tiny booklet could be issued.

Moreover, the school paper must be representative of the school. Children with ability to write must have an opportunity to get on the staff. With this incentive the composition work of the school takes on a keener and more vital interest. At the end of each term at Thomas Jefferson Junior High School English teachers send in lists of recommendations. Usually there are from one hundred to two hundred applicants for twenty openings on the staff. The best ones are selected through an examination, involving a test on the four most common mistakes and a piece of imaginative writing. For poetry or composition work a sample of imaginative writing could be used; but newspaper work requires writing the work assigned when assigned. Too often well meaning parents or sisters help in the weekly composition work. In a competitive examination the child shows his own work.

Why are some classes taken to handle the newspaper work, instead of a representative group? In the small school very often the junior or senior English class publishes the school paper in addition to the regular assignment. In the senior high schools of

Cleveland, journalism can be taken instead of junior English. The difficulty of arranging the program of studies has also left this method of having one class edit the paper as the only possible one for the small school.

For the large school the third requirement is necessary, the requirement that the teacher have only two English classes in addition to her news writing work. The teacher must be free to work with the children during their free periods.

News writing, unlike most schoolwork, is individual. While the beginning class can be handled in a group, the actual editing of the school paper comes as a separate problem for each member of the staff. These members work on different news stories, headlines, page make-up, or administration problems. These students require constant supervision, which cannot be given in class. After a term of the beginning group, staff members who have survived the course come to the teacher during her free periods. Thus, the staff is not only made up of the best pupils of the English classes, but also of those pupils who have tried out their ability for actual newspaper work.

I usually tell my beginning class that the possibility of their reaching the advanced group depends on the shape of their noses. If they have "a nose for news," they can go far in the work. A training course for noses includes developing the instinct for news, accuracy, and reliability. Children with unusual writing ability do not always succeed on the school paper. In fact, imagination often leads them to distort facts into an ideal story, at the expense of truth.

For that reason it is wise for every school to maintain a literary class or club, such as the creative writing class at our own school, which helps children in the purely imaginative writing. The editorial page of the newspaper is the best outlet for such work in the form of poetry, stories, book reviews,

editorials, or clever columns of personal opinion.

Some members of the staff are assigned to this special work, since the group in our own school is limited to poetry. From the beginning class also comes the majority of the work for the editorial page.

The pupils of the beginning class get along more quickly in a class by themselves, studying from textbooks with regular assigned work. The atmosphere of the classroom can be maintained by the use of a regular English room, while the staff work should be carried on in the newspaper office with a feeling of the businesslike atmosphere of production.

In Cleveland the following is the course of study for journalism. As is evident the outline applies only to the beginning class, while the members of the staff work directly on the paper.

1. General information concerning the modern newspaper—3 lessons
2. Principles of good writing in general—3 lessons
3. Writing of news articles—12 lessons
4. Exchanges—2 lessons
5. Interviews—6 lessons
6. Feature writing—6 lessons
7. Athletic news—5 lessons
8. Editorials and editorial features—6 lessons
9. Miscellaneous articles—2 lessons
10. Heads and make-up—3 lessons
11. Review—3 lessons

This outline plans the work on a basis of 51 lessons, while the average class lasts one term or one year, as the adviser decides. If the work is carried on in the English class, this number must be greatly reduced.

There are no grades or divisions in the news writing course. At the beginning of the second term the news writing class is composed of twenty to thirty pupils. At the end of the work the best are placed on the staff. At Thomas Jefferson, a school of nearly two thousand children, about fifty

are on the paper, not including the typists who prepare the work for the printer, the advertising staff which collects the advertisements under the financial adviser, and talented artists who draw cartoons or letter attractive signs for the bulletin board.

*The Jefferson Quill* is a four-page paper, with six columns, each measuring  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches wide. The editor-in-chief is the head of the organization with four assistants who edit the first, second, third, and fourth pages. The first and fourth pages are devoted to news, the third to sports, and the second is the editorial page. The home-room and class news are carried in a special column on the back page, and in the same way news of the fifty clubs, which meet during the activity period on Tuesday morning, appears on the last page.

Departments on the editorial page are varied from month to month. The joke column is by far the most popular, especially since jokes which actually have happened in the school are run instead of those clipped from exchanges. Literary contributions are printed, a column for student letters, a book column, puzzles, amusing features such as students who resemble movie stars, favorite dishes of students, who's who, and other novelties.

Editorials are written under three divisions with an effort to run one of each type, so as not to have the editorials resemble each other: the informational, this gives the circumstances which lead up to some bit of news, or descriptive writing on various subjects; the reform, under which the majority of so-called "peachy editorials" are classed; and the news comment which gives an opportunity for personal opinions which the news article forbids.

The news stories of the paper are listed on the "assignment sheet" by the editor who also assigns the reporters, places the word lengths, number of headline and date due on the list. Stories which "die" be-

cause of unimportance or changes of dates must be replaced by new stories which usually arrive about five seconds before press time.

The work of the paper is carried on in four week cycles. The first week, stories are assigned and editors plan their pages or departments. The next two are spent in the actual collecting, writing and rewriting of news. At the same time the editors are preparing their headlines according to the models on the head sheet which specify the number of letters in each line and bank. At the beginning of the third week, the paper goes to press and is returned in the form of two sets of galleys. One set is proof-read for mistakes, while the other is cut and pasted on the "dummy." A second proof shows the paper in page form, and a day later the papers are delivered.

The business adviser has charge of the selling of the paper, the collecting of advertisements, and the paying of bills. Representatives bring to the storeroom envelopes which are marked with the name of the teacher, the room, grade, number of orders, and amount of money enclosed. Thus it is possible to keep a record of each room. Those rooms which have a perfect sale record are given recognition. Month-by-month sales are necessary, although schools which draw from a more wealthy neighborhood could use the subscription method.

From this explanation of the organization of the school paper it is plain why long experience has formulated the five requirements of the Teachers of Journalism. Many schools publish larger papers more often, but the work and expense makes a five-column standard advisable for the junior high school.

Only sufficient time can produce a good student-written publication. If the teacher cannot work with the members of the staff, either work must be done after school or many of the details must be attended to by the teacher herself. It is a great deal easier

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to do things than to teach other people to do them. (I have often wondered if Miles Standish ever worked as adviser to a student publication.) Educators would be horrified if their English teachers wrote thirty compositions a week, but that is just what many teachers of journalism are forced to do unless they can have a large well-trained staff in a workroom.

Articles or headlines written by the teacher ruin the school paper. The children lose interest in a paper no longer theirs. Every word, every headline must be their work. Moreover, the financial problem of the paper increases as the student interest decreases. Children will not buy a paper which has the teacher's point of view. Each story must be the student reaction to child interests—this makes the paper a self-supporting proposition.

The expense is the most important factor in keeping principals from starting a school paper. Many educators hold to the old idea that the paper printed in the school print shop is easier and cheaper. In Cleveland at least this method has been given up by most schools, as it entails an extra teacher, additional equipment, all of which runs into thousands of dollars. Moreover, the quality of the work is far below that of a professional printer. It is only in the technical high school that it is wise to have the paper printed in the school.

A self-supporting newspaper is easily made possible, even when the bill runs more than one hundred dollars a month, by

having the subscriptions pay at least half, and by running from thirty to forty inches of advertisements at seventy-five cents an inch.

Three other things often greatly increase the bill; a too liberal allowance for cuts, ordering too many papers from the printer, and poor editing with additional penalties for galley which is either not used or corrected. All of these things can be avoided by good organization.

The annual contests for school papers are about the best way for testing the success of the paper. Both the Columbia Scholastic Press and the National Scholastic Press, as well as state and local organizations conduct contests for papers published under similar conditions, that is, divisions according to school, enrollment, or kinds of schools. Rankings are given the papers, and detailed report gives the good and bad points of each paper. For the National Association score books are given out of some thirty pages with one thousand points. If a paper ranks over eight hundred points out of that number, it holds the title of Pace-maker, which *The Jefferson Quill* has had for three years.

In organizing a school paper this fact must be kept in mind, a good paper can only arise out of good conditions. In organizing the new paper, conditions must not handicap the school paper, but help it. The five conditions as laid down in Cleveland offer a good basis for the organization of the new school publication.

## THE GRAMMATICAL MERRY-GO-ROUND

HOWARD R. DRIGGS

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Dr. Driggs is professor of English education at New York University and a member of the editorial committee which prepared this number of the CLEARING HOUSE. The present article illustrates, with one case, what his extensive experimentation has shown to be true in most cases.* F. E. L.

"Well, this year my pupils are going to know their grammar," a certain teacher of an eighth grade announced a bit testily one

morning to the supervisor of English. "These high-school teachers will not get any further chance to complain that the

boys and girls from my class don't know a noun from a verb, or a phrase from a sentence."

"Oh, that is just a sample of the criticism that is coming from high-school teachers everywhere," responded the supervisor. "I'd make surer that it is well founded before I made any drastic changes in the course. As it is, you are giving more than half of the time to grammar. Perhaps the poor showing of the pupils is due simply to a change of methods they meet in the high school, or to the variations in grammatical terminology. Anyway formal grammar is very easy to forget."

"Not if it is drilled into their heads," returned the teacher; "and mark me, I am going to give my pupils a drilling this year that will make grammar stay with them."

The determination was not to be overruled, so the supervisor subsided; but with an inward resolution to study results. Because he happened to have a son in this particular eighth-grade class, he was enabled to watch the work closely, not only as a supervisor but as a parent.

The opening attack on the subject was vigorous; and as promised, there was no letting up throughout the year. The pupils were given a steady diet of grammar in the good old-fashioned way. They were drilled in names and definitions; they classified and parsed; they memorized rules of syntax; they diagramed sentences every day for months. And they seemed to be getting returns that justified the earnest effort. In the handling of the mechanics of their language, the pupils showed a proficiency that looked most promising of lasting results.

The final eighth-grade tests brought a glow of triumph to the teacher. Every one of the pupils passed in grammar, some of them with flattering marks. The son of the supervisor won something over eighty. Most of the class went on into the ninth grade of the local high school, and for a

month or two everything seemed to be going forward with no further complaints as to the preparedness of the pupils in their grammar.

Then came a setback to the high hopes. One evening the son came home with a troubled look in his face and said, "Father, I wish you would help me on my English work tonight."

"What is the trouble now?"

"Well, Miss — says that we don't know our grammar, and she's going to teach us some. What is a relative pronoun, daddy?"

"Do you mean to tell me, son, that after all the drilling you were given last year you cannot answer that for yourself?" asked the astonished parent.

"I've forgotten all about it," confessed the boy, "and I'm not the only one. The class was all mixed up today when she gave us a quiz."

The father began to stimulate the boy's memory with a few questions.

Finally the lad broke out with, "Oh, I know what it is! You draw a line this way, and then you make a dotted line down like this." He was diagraming with his finger in the air as he spoke.

Further probing by the father brought out plainly the fact that the boy's grammatical knowledge was practically all bound up with devices. The functional aspects of the subject had not dawned on him, and through no fault of his own. Manifestly what he and his classmates had been given was the chaff and straw of the study, not the living kernels of truth. They had been taught "diagrammar" rather than real grammar. This is said, too, with no disrespect for the diagram as a helpful means in teaching the subject; when, however it is made an end—as it is too often, diagraming largely defeats its own purpose.

To continue our story, the boy was given his second drilling in formalistic grammar. He passed creditably out of his freshman

and sophomore years in that particular high school. Then he was taken by his parents to a large city where he entered another high school. About two months later he came home one day with a number of mimeographed sheets in hand.

"What is this?" queried his father.

"Oh, it's just some of the same old stuff, daddy. Our English teacher says we don't know our grammar, and she's going to teach us some."

"Why, this is what you've had twice already," remarked the father critically.

Again there was drilling on forms and definitions with parsing and diagraming and memorization of rules. And again the boy was passed with satisfactory marks. That fall he entered one of the leading universities. Three weeks later he came home from his freshman class in English with another assignment in eighth-grade grammar.

"Well, it certainly seems, son, that we are spending a good deal of time and money to get nowhere," said the father. "This thing has gone past the point of a joke; yet it suggests a joke to me. It reminds me of the story of 'Rastus and the merry-go-round.'"

"What story is that?" asked the boy.

"A thriftless Negro, it is said, once took his good wife to the country fair. While there he became so charmed with the merry-go-round that he bought a ticket and mounted one of the prancing ponies. The thrill of it held him to another ride and another and still another until, all his nickels spent, he had to come down to earth. As he dismounted from the musical machine, his angry spouse shook her umbrella at him and said, 'You no 'count niggah! You done spent all your money on dat fool

merry-go-round, and you got off right whar you started from.'"

Now the chief concern of teachers of grammar or of any other subject should be to see that their pupils do not get off "right whar they started from." If grammar is to be worth the time and effort now spent on the subject, it must be something more than a learning-to-forget process—a treadmill of formalistic exercises. The thing demanded is *not less, but better grammar*. And *better grammar* will come only when the pupils are given a climbing course that ends with a knowledge in grammar that really functions.

Truly functional grammar, let it be emphasized here, means a great deal more than merely correct usage. Not only in the use of the correct forms of speech, but in verb mastery, in the effective use of adjectives and adverbs, in accuracy of prepositions and conjunctions, skill in sentence building, together with a practical knowledge of phrases, clauses, participles, infinitives, and idioms, is one's working knowledge of grammar revealed. Grammar that actually functions reflects its practical worth in every phase of our everyday speech. It is the warp to the woof of our living language.

How to teach grammar from this living viewpoint is the question that presses for solution. How to make the subject really purposeful, useful, the problem. The answer will be satisfactorily given not by mere pedagogical discussion, but by demonstration. If we are ever to lift grammar out of the horsepower rut of formalistic teaching in which old-line texts and imitative teachers are holding it, we must show concretely right in the classroom what vitalized grammar really means.



## PROMOTING A LOVE OF POETRY

L. W. RADER

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Mr. Rader, district superintendent of intermediate schools, St. Louis, is the editorial chairman of this number of the CLEARING HOUSE. He is author of textbooks on English and a contributor to many educational publications.*

F. E. L.

Are we still studying and analyzing poetry in the field of secondary education or are we reading it from a sense of appreciation? Somewhere and somehow beyond the primary grades most children lose their appreciation for poetry. They love to hear the teacher or some other good reader interpret poetry, but seldom do pupils voluntarily select and read poetry except in obedience to the assignment of the teacher. The taste of the adult is imposed as a guide instead of the taste of the youth.

Children lose their instinctive love of poetry because their power to understand its condensed expression does not keep pace with the difficulty of the poetry given them to read. To meet this difficulty the teacher often spoils a poem by making it a word study instead of reading it. It is analyzed as to structure like a problem in arithmetic. The solution of this problem is to be found in the selection and classification of poetry content with reference to rhythm and symbolism, and not in the mere collection of information.

Dr. Overstreet in his book *About Ourselves* has a chapter entitled "Why Poetry? A Psychological Approach to Poetic Values." I quote these words from this chapter:

Does he love poetry? Do you groan? He studied poetry—in school. Teachers have done more to dull the edge of poetry than all the philistines in the world. It is their very pedagogical solicitude which has done it. Assigned lessons in poetry have helped to destroy its beauty. Describe the metric construction of *The Vision of Sir Launfal*. Analyze Holmes's *The Last Leaf*. Unimaginative literary science has associated poetry with the dreariness of homework and the fear of flunks, instead of being associated with freedom and song and exhilarating adventure.

Where appreciation is the objective, assignment of work cannot be made the general program. Choice must be a great factor in the reading of poetry if appreciation is to be the objective. For this reason much material of all grades must be found in the classroom, leaving the pupil exposed to all types of poetry from which he may make his choice.

In the selection of poetry for the different grades the child's interests should be made fundamental, but not the exclusive guide. His interest may originate in the story of the poem or literal facts. The more mature judgment of a teacher is needed in the selection of poetry which presents a gradual growth in imagery, the chief source of the beauty of poetry.

In a widely used series of poetry books of recent publication the interests of children it is said assigned the following poem to the beginning of the second grade:

### *The Pasture*

I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;  
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away  
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):  
I shan't be gone long—You come too.

I'm going out to fetch the little calf  
That's standing by the mother. It's so young,  
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.  
I shan't be gone long—You come too.

—ROBERT FROST

If appreciation of the beauty of poetry was considered in assigning this poem to children just completing the first grade, then the child's interest was strikingly misleading. This beautiful little poem is a prelude to Mr. Frost's book of poems, *North of Boston*. It is an invitation to the reader to go with the poet to the region where

most of the poems originated and were inspired. The imagery is found in transforming the poet into a farmer who goes out to do two things, clean the leaves out of the spring so the cattle may have clean, fresh water to drink, and bring in a newborn calf. This symbolism reveals a very refined and delicate piece of art on the part of the poet—much too difficult for a second-grade child.

The child's interests center in raking leaves from the spring, and in the tottering calf, instead of in the beauty of the poet's imagery. This little masterpiece when presented to children so young is reduced to the most prosaic level. It is with this standard of imagery as a guide in supplementing the interest of the child, we endeavor to redistribute poetry content instead of using it as found in standard textbooks.

#### REDISTRIBUTION OF THE CONTENT OF POETRY IN THE ST. LOUIS CURRICULUM IN THE LIGHT OF RHYTHM AND IMAGERY

Surveys made to determine how much and the quality of poetry voluntarily read by pupils of the junior and senior high schools, while students of school and after leaving the secondary school, seem to show that somewhere above the primary grades pupils lose a love and appreciation for poetry.

Tests and studies thus far seem to warrant the following assumptions:

1. The beauty of poetry originates in sound and imagery.
2. The growth of imagery or symbolism should be a strong factor in supplementing the likes and dislikes of children, as a guide selecting the content of poetry for a curriculum.
3. In the primary grades children desire poetry of the symbolic type rather than the factual or didactic type.
4. The miscellaneous selection of poetry in the elementary grades, thereby disregarding growth of imagery, seldom prepares a pupil for the imagery of Keats, Shelley, etc., with the result that these authors are read by few high-school students outside the classroom.

5. Most pupils in all grades appreciate poetry when read and interpreted by a good reader.
6. It is the exceptional pupil who can interpret through his own resources the poetry of his own grade.
7. If a similar reaction from pupils is expected in the field of poetry as in the field of prose, our teaching of poetry is an absolute failure.
8. In two years of supervision prior to this campaign pupils rarely were known to appear for an audience reading with a selection of poetry voluntarily chosen; during the past year, in schools participating in this campaign this was seen in most audience reading programs.

As a result of these studies and conferences of groups of teachers, a campaign for the improvement of instruction in the appreciation of poetry was outlined as follows:

#### I. Suggested Procedure

1. Analyze and measure the appreciation of pupils by their reactions to the chief elements of poetry; namely, rhythm, sound, imagery, word painting, etc. Suggested activities for evaluation:
  - a) Teacher reading poems informally from reading content of the grade.
  - b) Teacher reading in like manner from poetry content one, two, or three years below grade of pupil.
  - c) Pupils, who read well, as in a and b.
  - d) Pupils repeating poetry of their own choice.
2. Make a survey of children's difficulties in ability to read, ability to appreciate the elements of poetry, etc.
3. Prepare material, methods, devices, etc., for improving individual pupils.
4. Demonstrate in class principles and methods being studied and used.

#### II. Steps in Plan

1. Test pupils in their abilities to read, to listen, and to appreciate poetry of their own grade and of lower grades.
2. Record results.
3. Give pupils the opportunity of making rhyme and verse. Record their reaction.
4. Keep record of work done and of remedial plans.
5. Expose pupils of upper grades to poetry of lower grades. Keep record of voluntary readings.
6. Evaluate methods and devices employed. Record results.

7. Note difficulties presented in each grade, as to appreciation of figures of speech, as to self-consciousness, sensitiveness to criticism, etc.
8. List suitable material for each grade.

### III. Guiding Principles

1. Setting up objectives.
  - a) Appreciation of beauty as expressed in rhythm, rhyme, pictures, word painting, etc. Pleasurable appreciation and not information is the objective.
2. Leading pupils to read poetry through their own volition.
3. Training pupils to interpret poetry through their own resources as they interpret prose.
4. Leading pupils to read and to interpret short poems in audience reading.
5. Preparing programs of the reading of short poems.

### IV. Difficulties

1. Lack of graded material.
2. Pupils who are poor readers.
3. Pupils who have no sense of rhythm, sound, imagery, etc.
4. Pupils of the adventurous age—reluctant to show the finer sentiments.
5. Pupils who see beauty nowhere.

### V. Criteria for Evaluating Appreciation

1. Knowledge of the author's life.
2. Ability to see common characteristics in prose stories and in poetry.
3. Ability to illustrate poetry.
4. Ability to show by movement or line on blackboard the rhythm of poetry.
5. Ability to express both the prosaic and poetic forms of a thought.
6. Ability to understand the material of which poetry is made.
7. Ability to feel the swing, emotion, and imagery of poetry.

### VI. Criteria for Evaluating Instruction in the Appreciation of Poetry

1. Pleasure expressed by children in repeating poetry.
2. Achievement in making rhyme and verse.
3. Voluntary reading of poetry found in classroom library.
4. Emotion expressed in the beauty of rhythm, sound, and imagery.
5. Appreciation of the poetic expression of plain thoughts.
6. Reaction of pupils to the reading of poems by the teacher, or the best readers of the class.

7. Frequency of requests made by pupils for the repeating and the reading of poetry.
8. Amount of poetry voluntarily learned.

Data from these tests and studies will be organized and tabulated, with the hope that the results of these studies may prove helpful to other teachers interested in the problems set forth in our study.

### PERMANENT RESULTS

If social efficiency is the objective in secondary education, the training in habits and the development of interests in the field of literature by students of our high schools will be expressed in the lives of students and citizens, either after finishing a given subject or leaving school. Is the test of teaching poetry then to be found in the quantity and quality of poetry voluntarily read by students when not under the direct influence of the teaching, or in the verbal and intellectual responses of teacher assignments?

The following survey just made would indicate that the teaching of poetry in the high school of St. Louis in a very small degree cultivates a love for reading poetry. The following questionnaire was sent to each of the fourteen library centers in St. Louis, with the request by Dr. Bostwick, the librarian, that each library staff report after sixty days. During this interval the members of the staff in each center used every opportunity to interview students calling for poetry material. This procedure it seems would give considerable validity to the replies of the first three questions. Other factors, such as home libraries, magazines, etc., enter into the sources of poetry material read by adults, so that the validity of the replies to questions four and five is much lessened. The following is a summary of the replies received from the fourteen library centers. The reply to any question is the common verdict of the entire staff of a library center:

1. (a) library poetry?

(a)

2. W content assign

A given Standard General Modern

3. I poetry?

4. (a) poetry?

(a) Yes No Fe

5. (a) Standard

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## ADULT POETRY ISSUE

During the year 1928, the total adult circulation of books in St. Louis was 1,692,724, of which number 24,321 volumes were poetry or a little less than 1½ per cent. In 1929 the total adult circulation of books was 1,734,873 with 24,743 volumes of poetry, the percentage of poetry remaining almost identically the same. Having no data upon the proportional part adult poetry issue is of the total adult circulation in other places, no comment is made upon this data.

If the criterion of success in teaching poetry is the amount of poetry read by pupils uninfluenced by suggestions and assignments of the teacher, there is much lost motion and wasted energy in our efforts to teach an appreciation of poetry. If the same reaction on the part of the pupil in the field of reading poetry is expected as in the field of reading prose literature, then our teaching is still less futile. The first step in bringing about a change in the results of teaching of poetry is a redistribution of poetry through the grades and an exposure of pupils to large quantities of poetry of all grades, and less studying and analyzing of poetry.

## BOOK REVIEWS

1. (a) Do high-school students take from the public library, upon their own volition apparently, books of poetry? (b) If so, in small or large numbers?

(a) Seldom 10	(b) Small 10
No 4	None 4

2. When students of high schools call for poetry content, what seems to have been the nature of the assignment on the part of the teacher?

A given number of lines or a definite poem....	9
Standard and modern.....	2
General works of poets rather than specific....	1
Modern.....	2

3. Is the high school cultivating an appreciation of poetry?

Yes.....	1
No.....	8
Attempting.....	5

4. (a) Do adults after leaving high school read poetry? (b) If so, what types of poetry?

(a) Yes 6	(b) Modern.....	6
No 3	Narrative and lyric...	2
Few 5	Dramatic and lyric...	1
	Standard and contemporary.....	1

5. (a) Are people reading modern poetry? (b) Standard poetry?

(a) Yes 7	(b) Yes 5
No 1	No 2
Few 6	Few 7

*Elements of English Related to the Judgment of Poetry in Grade XI*, by JOSEPH SHACHTMAN (Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1929, pp. 51).

This is a study of the relationship between certain "elements" of English as they are related to the judgment of poetry in grade XI. The elements studied are: correct usage, formal grammar, general intelligence, and understanding of literary passages. By means of standardized tests in language and literature involving somewhat intricate correlation studies, the author comes to these conclusions: first, there is a low but positive relationship between a knowledge of grammar and good usage and the ability to judge poetry; second, of the elements of English tested, the one that correlated most highly with the ability to judge

poetry is comprehension of literary passages; and third, mental ability correlated more highly with ability to judge poetry than did any of the elements of English tested.

This is a neat, compact, scholarly piece of work. The chief applicative value of the study would seem to be that grammar and usage work should be separated from the work in literature, especially in poetry. There is a useful bibliography.

WALTER BARNES

*Articulation in English Between the High School and College*, by WILLIAM EUGENE VAUGHAN, (Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1929, pp. 76).

This is a study of freshman English in twenty-one State-supported Southern higher educational institutions and the senior English in their accredited

high schools. By means of catalogue investigations, high-school courses of study, questionnaires and correspondence, a survey of educational magazines, and by some tests and a survey of freshman college composition, the author comes to certain conclusions concerning the articulation of English between the high school and college.

Some of the conclusions are such as would easily be confirmed by common observation. That there is a lack of articulation between these educational agencies is clear. When, however, one attempts to secure a greater degree of articulation by means of accepting the opinion of either high-school or college teachers, the results can hardly be accepted at face value. The conclusion, that "much of the work in the mechanics of writing and all the English grammar done in the freshman college year should be covered in high school," and the statement that "high-school seniors do not meet the expectations of freshman English instructors in a knowledge of the elemental facts of literature," have little weight or significance. What a student of the subject would accept as a means of securing closer articulation between the two institutions is an attempt to give philosophical orientation to both high-school and college teachers of English. It is not so much that there is lack of understanding between the two institutions as that probably both are wrong in their educational objectives. Certainly the attempt to decide what English should be taught in high school by culling the statements of either high-school and college teachers of English is vain and futile. Furthermore, the fact that only a relatively small per cent of high-school students continue their education in college is ignored in this study.

The chief value of this investigation would seem to be the necessity of bringing high-school and college teachers of English together in some common objective.

WALTER BARNES

*Words (Second Revised Edition)*, by RUPERT P. SORELLE AND CHARLES W. KITT (The Gregg Publishing Company, New York, pp. 192).

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CHARLES T. HAINSFELD

*Junior High School English, Books One and Two*, by CLAUDIE E. CRUMPTON. Book Three by CLAUDIE E. CRUMPTON AND JAMES F. HOSIC (American Book Company, 1928).

This three-book series of English texts for junior high-school pupils is informed throughout by a clearly defined, modern philosophy of education, and is filled to the brim with clever devices and procedures. It deals for the most part with language activities that are of practical and immediate importance to young people. It is well socialized, well graded, and well articulated.

The books are perhaps somewhat reminiscent of the earlier language books in the piecemeal organization, but the constructive, dynamic elements are well developed, and the treatment of the mechanics is skillful. In the opinion of the present reviewer the books contain somewhat too large a proportion of grammar material and are somewhat too insistent upon mere correctness.

On the whole, however, the series should be welcomed as a serious and thoughtful and promising attempt to solve the intricate and baffling problem of language training for young people in the junior-high-school area.

WALTER BARNES

*The Great Investment*, by THOMAS H. BRIGGS, (Harvard University Press, 1930, pp. x+143).

In the Inglis Lecture of 1930 Professor Briggs has stimulated widespread thought and discussion of the relation between the public schools and the State. The emphasis is placed largely on the necessity of so planning the curricula of public schools of all levels that they may inculcate the knowledge, the attitudes, and the loyalties necessary to perpetuate all that we consider good in our society.

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